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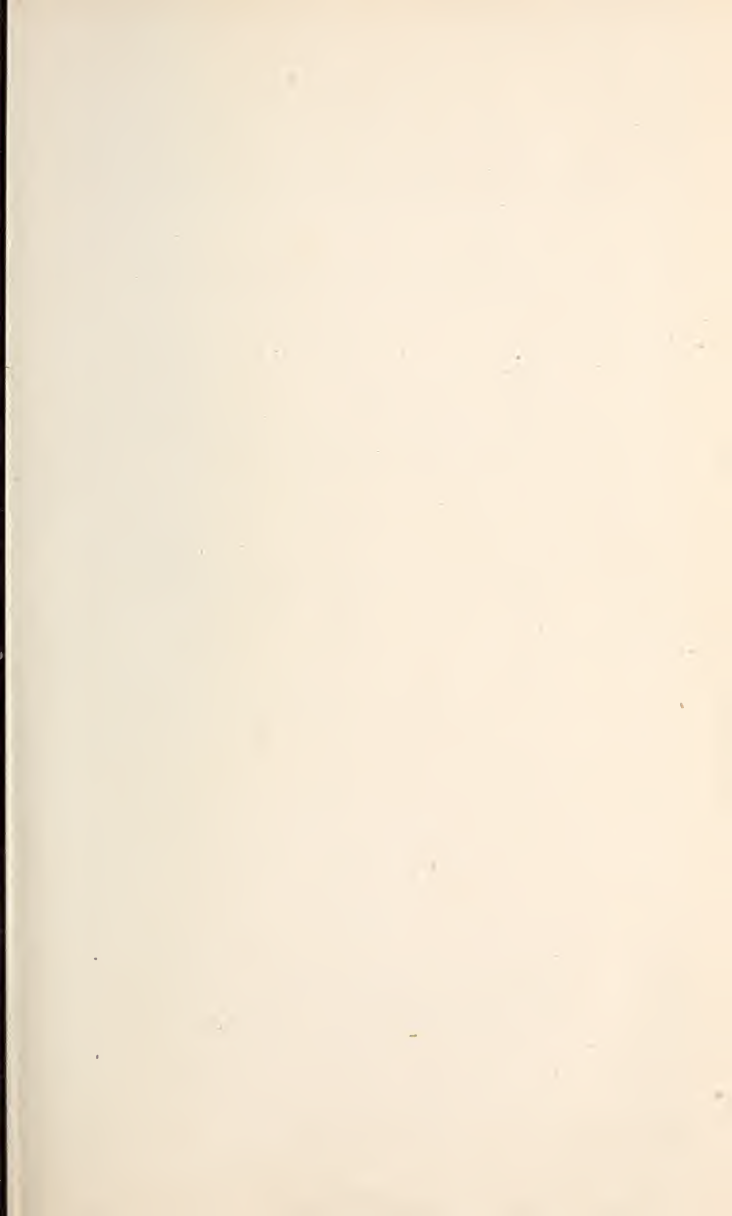
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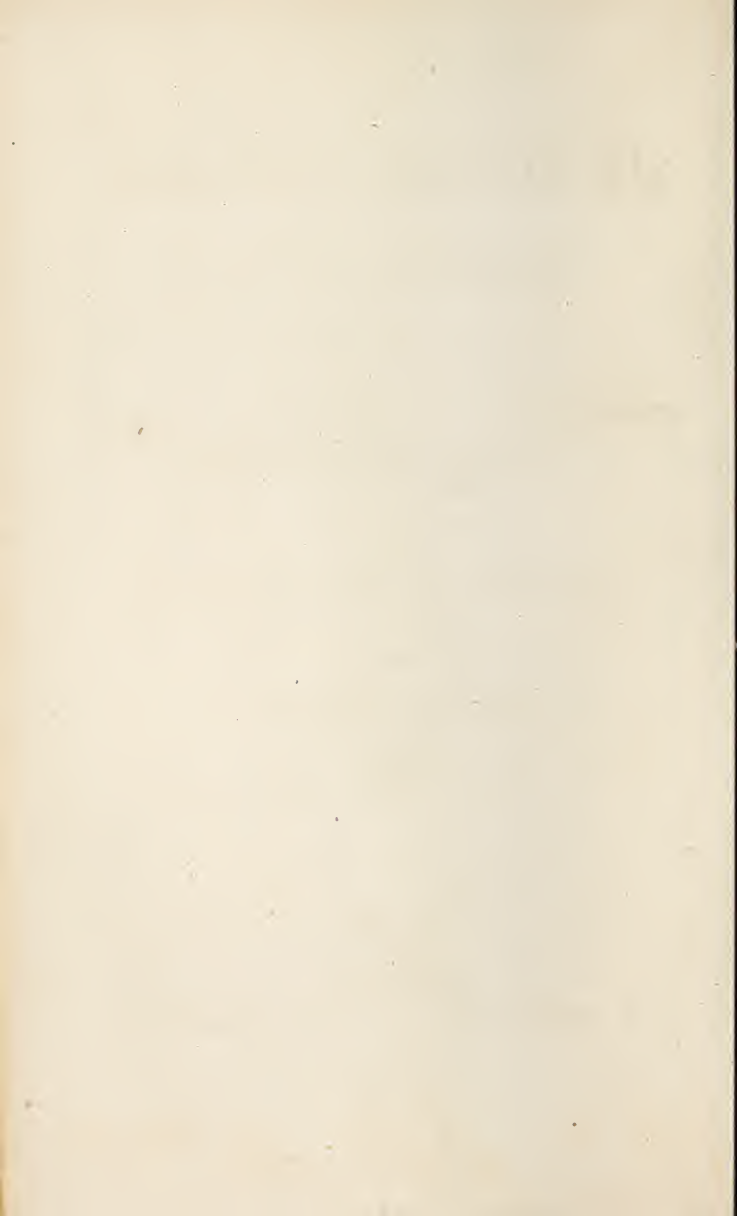
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









THE
SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND
COMBATANTS;

OR,

THE CHILDREN OF THE PATRIARCHS CONQUERING
THE PROMISED LAND.

BY

BROTHER PHILIPPE.

TRANSLATED BY

CHRISTINE FARVILLE.



NEW YORK:
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BISHOPRIC OF VERSAILLES.

HAVING seen the favorable report of a publication called "The Six Hundred Thousand Combatants," we approve of this book as highly adapted for the edification of its readers.

✠ PIERRE,
BISHOP OF VERSAILLES.

VERSAILLES, *March 31st*, 1860.



P R E F A C E .

How beautiful it is to contemplate Divine Providence in those grand bodies which compose the universe, and which are governed with a skill and a wisdom so far above human conception! How admirable it is to see the regularity and the majesty of the course of those myriads of stars which light up the heavens with such magnificence! And how much greater will be our admiration, if we also contemplate Providence in the infinite number of plants, trees, and of living beings which are spread over the surface of the earth, which fill the ponds, the rivers, the waters of the seas, which find food and necessary subsistence for the preservation of their lives, and which reproduce from generation to generation, without confusion whatsoever in their species.

If the study of Divine Providence ruling and governing the universe be admirable, it is not less so regarding the human race. We have already had cause to admire the care and the maternal solicitude of Providence toward the Patriarchs, in a book entitled: *The first Pilgrims* (*Les premiers Pelerins*). Here we shall see the same solicitude for a people cared for and guided—as a good mother would her children whom she loves, and for whom she procures the necessary food for the life of the body and the soul.

In the origin, this people formed but a simple family; and a patriarch in the midst of his twelve children governed it. Twenty years had scarcely elapsed, when this family was composed of sixty persons; and four hundred years later, though groaning under the oppression of a most cruel bondage, it formed a formidable people, numbering over two millions of souls, six hundred thousand of whom were fighting men. Under the protection of Providence, this new nation was delivered from a cruel tyranny which tended to anni-

hilate it; and guided by Providence through a vast wilderness, the Israelites marched forth in good order under the standards of twelve tribes, in order to conquer a land which was, according to the figurative expression of the Scriptures, flowing with milk and honey. Who would dare to resist them, when the rivers and the seas respected them and most marvellously separated their waters to afford them a free passage? Who would harm them, when in the midst of the burning sands of Arabia, and during the long period of forty years, Heaven supplied them with delicious bread and abundance of meat? Streams of clear water flowed from the most arid rocks, and furnished them with a pure and refreshing beverage throughout their long and wearisome expeditions. And this same Providence, forever watchful of their wants, preserved their garments, and their shoes, whilst he covered them with a rich and mighty pavilion which sheltered them from the scorching rays of the sun, and protected them from the suffocating heat of the burning sand, which otherwise

would have been insupportable. And is it not Providence again who raised up for this people a man, of eminent virtue and science, a thaumaturgus who performed miracles, and who was their leader, their general, and after Jesus Christ, of whom he was the figure, the greatest legislator ever known, and whose laws, to this day, form the basis and the support of all good governments. Under him the people wandered for many years in the wilderness, but guided and protected by the ægis of the God of battles, they conquered the chosen land which had been promised to them. At their very approach the strongest walls fell before them; idolaters were vanquished, driven away, and exterminated, their impious monarchs murdered, and at length, this people elect, these children of God, became absolute masters of the beautiful and fertile fields of their enemies.

Such is the interesting history of the children of the *First Pilgrims*, which forms this volume. And though it has been destined as a separate book, it may be considered a sequel to the above mentioned one. It offers the

same plan and the same parts. It will likewise be of some utility for the example and the instruction of Christian families, for children, and especially for those who study sacred history. Here they will find all the developments and explanations of certain facts and of passages which might otherwise puzzle them.

We shall consider ourselves amply rewarded, if, by our earnest endeavors, we succeed in inspiring an entire filial confidence in Divine Providence.



THE
CHILDREN OF THE PATRIARCHS
IN SLAVERY.

EXILE PREFERRED TO GLORY.

I.

CHILDREN THROWN INTO THE NILE.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1737.

WHEN the Patriarch Jacob had learned that his son Joseph ruled with authority over all Egypt, he departed for that country in the hope of seeing him once more before he died. He took with him all his children and their families, and they settled in the land of Gessen.

The twelve sons of Israel were the heads of the twelve tribes which formed the people of God. These are their names : Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Dan, Judah, Napthali, Gad, Aser, Issachar, Zabulon, Joseph, and Benjamin. Joseph was the head of two tribes which took the names of his two sons Ephraim and Manasses.

However, God poured down His blessings upon the children of Israel, so that during near half a century, they multiplied in a prodigious manner. They were but sixty-two when they entered Egypt, and then they formed a great and powerful nation in the midst of this people who received them formerly with so much eagerness.

But the memory of the benefactor of Egypt was beginning to be forgotten amongst the Egyptians, and the new Pharaoh had not known Joseph. He saw with jealousy the rising power of the new people of Israel; they were all united together; they possessed great riches; they were laborious, skilful, enterprising in commerce, in agriculture and in arts; he feared their strength, their courage, and their warlike propensities. Then addressing himself to his people: "Behold," said he to them, "Israel has become a nation in itself; her power is already greater than ours, and we must fear her; if we leave her in peace, her power will grow stronger and stronger in our midst; if war is declared, this people will join our enemies, and they will destroy us by their strength, and after defeating us, and stripping us of every thing, they will go settle elsewhere, carrying with them all the riches they will have taken from us. I shall

anticipate their designs; I shall oppose their departure, elude their oppression; let us then overwhelm them with hard labor and keep them in slavery; but we must lessen their strength and their number."

The prince, therefore, began by confining them to the country assigned to them; he charged them with exactions and taxes, and condemned them to labor at the public works, like slaves or prisoners of war. They served as masons for the building of large edifices. They likewise obliged them to prepare and to make the cement, mortar, and bricks with which they were to work. To keep them continually occupied, the king determined upon having two cities built, one named Phiton, the other Rameses. They toiled in the sweat of their brow, and to complete their misfortune they were not paid but maltreated; thus they were condemned to the hardest work, to the most cruel servitude, and, moreover, they were insulted and abused.

But the Lord their God had a watchful eye over them, and despite these persecutions, they multiplied and they strengthened, and they were a source of fear to their tyrants. Pharaoh tried all possible means to prevent them from multiplying, and he ordered that all male children should be murdered at their birth. But the

God of Israel touched with a fear of his holy name the hearts of those who were charged to execute this order, and this barbarous persecution did not take place, and God rewarded them with happiness and abundance.

The king perceiving that his orders had not been attended to, punished severely those whom he had charged to execute them. He then resolved to use violence, and he ordered all the male children of the Hebrews to be thrown into the Nile. This was executed with the strictest rigor. But what power have the mightiest potentates of the universe against the Almighty, when He has willed to save His children? (Exod. i.)

Before the people of God entered the promised land, they had to suffer exile, persecution, and captivity; figure of the holy Church, and the true people of God, who cannot enter heaven but after exile, persecution, lamentations and tears.

II.

THE RUSH BASKET.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1725.

THE affliction was general, and Jochabed, whose husband was an Israelite named Amram, of the tribe of Levi, was mother of two children; one, a daughter, named Mary, the other, a son, named Aaron, who later became famous amongst his compatriots. When the persecution was at its utmost, Jochabed gave birth to another son; she little knew to what a glorious mission he was destined, at some future time!

She found the child so beautiful, so engaging, that she resolved to save it; she therefore contrived to conceal it carefully in the house. Three months elapsed since its birth and nothing had happened to reveal the child's existence, but the fatal moment of search, which was made in the families of the Hebrews, was at hand, and something should be done. Jochabed made, in the form of a small boat, a rush basket, closely interwoven and coated over with pitch and bitumen. She put the child into this little cradle and carried it to the river. After having closed the basket she placed it amongst

the reeds, fearing that the little bark might too soon be carried away by the rapidity of the current. Then she told her daughter Mary, aged eight or ten years, to keep the basket in sight, in order that she might know what should become of it ; she also bid her to hasten and tell her of its fate.

Whilst Jochabed departed from the river with sorrow in her heart, God kept a watchful eye over this child, and He led there another woman who was king Pharaoh's own daughter. She was accompanied by her gentlewomen, and she went thither to bathe. She walked in advance of them on the river side, when suddenly she perceived the pretty closed basket that floated in the midst of the reeds. Struck at such a novel sight, she sent one of her companions to bring it to her ; her orders were speedily executed, and the basket was opened ; when, O, surprise ! a lovely child appeared to their wondering eyes. Its beauty, its innocent and gentle appearance, its tears moved her and filled her heart with feelings of tenderness and compassion. "It is," said she, "the son of some of the Hebrews ; I cannot see it perish, I shall save it !" Mary, who had not lost sight of her brother, and hearing what the princess had said, approached respectfully and asked with simplicity,

“Is it your wish to have a Hebrew woman to nurse this little child?” “Hasten away then, my girl,” answered the princess, “and bring me a nurse.”

Never was an order more promptly or more joyfully executed. Mary sped home to her mother and related all that had passed, and both of them returned to the spot where Pharaoh's daughter was caressing the innocent little creature. “Take this child,” said the princess, “nurse it; and I shall liberally reward you for your services.”

What happiness! what joy! for a mother to be charged with the care of a son who had been condemned to die! The princess gave him the name of Moses, saying: “I have saved him from the water.” This is the signification of the word in Hebrew. (Exod. ii.)

Such are the decrees of Providence, who brings all things to a wise and just end. Through fear Jochabed had abandoned her son and it was given back to her; she is even paid for a service for which she would have given all the gold in the world. Pharaoh's daughter saved from the waters of the Nile a child who some day, would miraculously bury in the depths of the sea, the successors of this cruel prince who condemned so many innocent vic-

tims to perish. Thus Herod, in the massacre of the children of Bethlehem, had in view the death of the Saviour, and the Saviour alone escaped the massacre. After such palpable facts, who would dare oppose the designs of the Almighty?

III.

LOVE OF VIRTUE.

AFTER leaving the princess, Jochabed hastened home. Her first step was to show her husband their saved child, and to tell him all that had transpired concerning him. They were full of joy and gratitude, and they praised the Lord who had been so good in their behalf.

It may well be imagined how this child, so dear to God, was loved by its family, and with what religious care he was brought up. True, they took him from time to time to the court, where Pharaoh's daughter never saw him without conceiving for her protégé stronger sentiments of friendship. When his understanding was sufficiently developed, Amram and Jochabed taught him the religion of the true God, the history of the creation, the deluge, and the life of the Patriarchs. They related to him the mystery of his birth, the miraculous manner in

which he was saved, the misfortunes of his people, and their hopes. But a greater master than his parents engraved in the heart of the young Israelite their wise instructions, and thenceforward he was inspired with a generous contempt for the honors which awaited him at the court of the Pharaohs, and this heroic courage made him prefer the company of the oppressed faithful, to those who spent their lives in palaces, in splendor and in riches.

At length came the time when the child should be restored to the princess. This was a great trial for a youth of his age—he was not more than fourteen years old. Pharaoh's daughter had adopted him as her own son, she had great affection for him, and she destined for him a brilliant but pagan education: seductive pleasures, pompous sights, a career capable of flattering his young ambition; snares, allurements, and temptations were offered to him, but he was fortified against them! The great advantages which he might have obtained from his education, from the instructions of the most learned men of Egypt, the good-will and the favor of the king, his influence amongst the great of the kingdom, all were reserved for the execution of the designs of Providence and for the benefit of his brethren. For it is probable that

he visited his father from time, to time and that Amram impressed upon his mind the merciless captivity of his brethren, and the hopes of their deliverance.

And let us again admire how Providence triumphed over Pharaoh; this prince wished to exterminate the children of the Hebrews, and behold, he shelters within the walls of his palace, and he caresses as his grandson, he who was to deliver the people from the cruel bondage wherein he held them.

IV.

GENEROUS SACRIFICE.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1685.

WHEN Moses was forty years of age, and had a perfect knowledge of the Egyptians, he felt that God had grand designs in view for him; he therefore scorned all worldly grandeur, and animated with a firm and generous faith, he resolved to join his oppressed brethren. He renounced the title of adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, preferring to be afflicted with the people of God, and to suffer with them an unjust tyranny, than to live in the midst of the glory and favor which the court of a powerful monarch offered him.

He abandoned, then, the palace of the

Pharaohs, and went forth amongst the Israelites, who suffered the most cruel captivity. One day that he was in their midst, and was lamenting over their sad fate, he perceived at a distance an Egyptian who was violently beating one of the Hebrews. Moses was seized with indignation, and he flew to the rescue of his brother. He attacked the infuriated Egyptian, and he slew him. Fully aware of the danger of such a deed, he told the Israelite, whom he had delivered from the hands of his enemy, to keep the secret, and he buried the dead body in the sand. He thought that the Israelites would comprehend by this action that God had destined him to deliver them, but they were unwilling to submit to him, and instead of profiting by his zeal and his courage, they exposed him to the fury of Pharaoh. The very day after he had punished the cruel Egyptian, Moses returned to the country, and there he had the misfortune to witness a scene which afflicted him more than that of the previous day. Two Hebrews were fighting; Moses demanded the cause of their quarrel, and having decided against the transgressor, he said to him with authority: "Why do you strike your fellow-being? it little becomes you to kill one another whilst the Egyptians are leagued against us?"

“And why do you concern yourself about us?” proudly replied the offender; “who then has instituted you our judge? You would likely treat us as the Egyptian whom you killed yesterday!” At these words, Moses was seized with surprise and fear. He thought that this deed with which he was reproached, would soon reach the King’s ears. And indeed, Pharaoh was apprised of the death of the Egyptian, which was represented to him under the darkest colors, and death again was to be the punishment of the author of the crime. To elude the vengeance of Pharaoh, he fled to the land of the Midianites, which was situated on the borders of the Red Sea. (Exod. ii.)

Far preferable is it to suffer exile with a noble, just, and generous heart, than to do wrong and to remain the favorite of a prince, and to enjoy the happiness of the impious. Justice and truth are more valuable than all the gold in the world: so thought Moses, so think honest men.

THE TERM OF A LONG EXILE.

I.

THE WELL OF MIDIAN.

MOSES halted at a short distance from the dwelling of the priest of Midian. This priest adored the true God, and his name was Raguel or Jethro; he had seven daughters, whom he occupied guarding the herds. Such, then and there, was the employment of honorable families, and girls were not exempted therefrom.

The illustrious fugitive, like Jacob, when he arrived in Mesopotamia, rested himself near the well. He saw the daughters of Jethro filling their troughs with water for their flocks. Their work near over, some shepherds happened to come that way, and they thought to set aside these laborious girls, to use the water which they had destined for their cattle. Moses noticed their rude behavior, and felt indignant at them. He defended the shepherdesses and sent away their usurpers; and having aided them to draw sufficient water, he took charge of their herds. Pleased at this kind interference of the stranger, Jethro's daughters thanked him, and having inquired whence he came,

they returned to their father's house. Having been assisted in their work, they had returned home sooner than was their wont to do. Their father desired to know the cause of their early return. "It is," said they, "because an Egyptian whom we do not know, defended us against the violence of some strange shepherds. He drew water for us, and he gave drink to our cattle." "Where is the man?" exclaimed Jethro; "you should have given him marks of gratitude; and you should have conducted him hither. Retrace your steps, and endeavor to find your benefactor; let him come and partake of our repast."

Moses was still sitting near the well, and Jethro's daughters invited him to follow them to their father's house. He readily accepted, and he found so much kindness, so much sympathy, from Jethro, that they were soon united by the sincerest friendship. Jethro made him promise that he would remain in his family, and later he married one of his daughters named Sephora. For forty years Moses was herdsman for his father-in-law. (Exod. ii.)

A good action is never accomplished in vain; and if it be not rewarded in this life, it surely will in the next.

II.

FLAMES WHICH DO NOT CONSUME.

MOSES expected the fulfilment of the promise of Almighty God regarding His people. Amram, his father, was dead, leaving to his children the tradition of all past events, which he had received from Levi, his grandfather; and Levi from his great grandfather, Isaac; and Isaac from his father.

Pharaoh and those of his courtiers who had sworn the death of Moses, no longer existed; and Moses, the illustrious exile, could return without fear, to Egypt. Never was his presence more needed. The new monarch, whose name was also Pharaoh (a name common to all kings of Egypt), oppressed the Israelites more than ever. The latter were bitterly lamenting under the heavy yoke which overwhelmed them, but they anxiously expected the day of their deliverance. Their prayers reached the throne of God, who heard them with compassion, and was willing to be merciful to them, and to execute His promise in their behalf. One day that Moses was driving the cattle of Jethro, and was far advanced in the desert, he found himself at the foot of Mount Horeb.

This mountain is situated near the famous Mount Sinai, which God had chosen to be the theatre of so many wonders. Suddenly God appeared to him, amid a burning bush, and under the figure of a bright flame, that was resplendent with light, but it neither consumed the branches nor the leaves of the bush. Moses was amazed at such a marvellous occurrence. "I shall draw near," said he, "and I shall see why this bush does not burn, though so dazzling with fire." He eagerly approached it, when the Lord, desiring him to contemplate this vision, with due respect to His majesty, made His voice heard by these words: "Moses! Moses!"—"Here I am, Lord," answered he. "Approach not nearer; take off your shoes, for the ground on which you tread is sanctified by the presence of your God. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."

On hearing these words, Moses trembled, for he was seized with a religious fear, he covered his face with his hands, and he dared not raise his eyes whence came the voice. "I have seen with compassion," continued the Lord, "the calamities of my people, their cries and their lamentations have reached mine ear; I have heard their complaints, I am aware of the

cruelty of their taskmasters, I have seen the multitude and the violence of the evils with which they are afflicted; touched therefore at their grievances, I descend from the height of my glory to deliver them. I shall take them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and from that country where they are slaves; I shall send them into a fertile, rich, and extensive land, now occupied by the Canaanites. It shall be accomplished; the children of Israel shall not implore in vain the assistance of God, and the Egyptians shall not continue to oppress them with impunity. Prepare yourself, Moses! arm yourself with zeal; it is you whom I destine to go forth to Pharaoh to force him to let the Israelites depart from Egypt. (Exod. iii.)

What goodness on the part of God! He loves His children as a tender father, He pities those who suffer, He hears their sighs, and He counts their tears. Who could not love so compassionate a Father? who could refuse Him his confidence?

III

THE MIRACULOUS ROD.

MOSES was seized with fear; and whether from timidity, or diffidence in himself, he excused himself for a long time; it seemed, as it were, that the Lord should compromise with His servant, that He should answer for whatever was to happen, and that after dealing gently with him He should make him comprehend how terrible His wrath would otherwise be.

God then, had made known His will unto Moses. "Ah! who am I, O Lord, that I should go to Pharaoh, and should deliver the children of Israel?" "I shall be with you," replied the Lord; "all you undertake shall be marked by some miracle. When you shall have delivered my people, you shall offer me victims at the foot of this mountain whereon I shall give you my commands." "I must then go forth amongst the Israelites," answered Moses, "and I shall say: the God of your fathers has sent me to you. But if they ask me the name of this God, what answer shall I give?" "*I am who am,*" replied the Lord; "go and tell your brethren: He who sends me to you is the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham,

the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; this is my *name forever*; under this merciful name shall I make myself known to my people in the ages to come. Go, assemble the elders of Israel, and tell them all that I have said unto you: The God of my fathers has appeared to me, he has said: in my goodness I have visited my people. I have seen the evils with which they are stricken, I shall withdraw them from this abyss of suffering to send them forth into a land flowing with milk and honey. Your brethren will listen to your voice, and at the head of them you will go before Pharaoh to ask him to let the people depart into the desert to offer sacrifices to God: he will not hear you, then I shall extend my hand and many plagues shall afflict him and his people; and the king, severely chastised, will allow you to go, and you shall carry with you the rich spoils of Egypt." "But, O Lord, the Hebrews to whom you send me, will not believe me, they will look upon me as an impostor, and they will say the Lord has not appeared unto you." "Well! I shall give you something which will convince the incredulous. What do you hold in your hand?" "A rod," responded Moses. "Cast it on the ground," said the Lord to him. Moses obeyed, and immediately it was changed into a serpent, so that

he trembled with fear and was about to flee; but God said to him: "Fear not, take the serpent by the tail." Moses took hold of it, and the serpent was again transformed into a rod. God said also to him, "Put your hand into your bosom." Moses obeyed, and he withdrew his hand covered with a leprosy as white as snow. "Put back your hand into your bosom," said the Lord, and Moses withdrew it, perfectly cured. "Whatsoever I have done before you," added the Lord, "you shall do before the Hebrews, and by those miracles, they will acknowledge that the God of your fathers has appeared unto you; if they do not believe you, you will take, in their presence, water from the river, and you will pour it on the sand and it will change into blood." "But O Lord, I implore you," replied Moses, "to consider that I do not speak fluently, neither heretofore, nor since your servant has heard your voice." The resistance of Moses, or rather his great timidity, had something very strange in it. But God continued to manifest His patience towards him. "Who made the tongue of man?" said the Lord to him; "who gave him speech? who made the deaf, the dumb, the blind, and he who sees? Is it not I? Go forth then in peace, and do my will; I shall

speak by your lips, and I shall inspire you with whatsoever you shall say." Moses's heart failed him, yet taking a supplicating tone he said : " I pray you, O Lord, to send Him whom you have promised to send." But the time had not come, and the darkness should pass away before the truth* appeared to the world.

The many excuses of Moses offended God, but he said to him, " You have a brother named Aaron, who is also of the tribe of Levi; he can express himself with eloquence and grace. I shall send him to meet you, and he will be overjoyed. He shall speak for you, apprise him then of all that has transpired. He shall be your interpreter to the people, and you shall be mine to him; in such like manner you shall both learn the means whereby you are to execute my will. Keep the rod you hold, for it shall be the instrument of many miracles." Moses no longer showed resistance, and he immediately obeyed the Lord. (Exod. iii., iv.)

Diffidence in one's self should have its limits, otherwise it degenerates into pusillanimity, just as self-confidence and boldness may change

* That is to say, the Messiah, which was to deliver the world from a servitude more cruel than that of Egypt. This is why Moses asked that this Saviour should be sent to deliver the people of Israel.

into presumption. When God speaks to us, we should prove to Him the sincere confidence we have in His power.

IV.

HAPPY MEETING AT MOUNT HOREB.

MOSES had manifested great weakness, or rather a want of confidence in his own strength, but he was incapable of revolt. He therefore bent his steps towards Midian, and he said to Jethro, his father-in-law: "I shall return to my brethren who are suffering in captivity, I wish to see if they are still alive." "Go in peace," said Jethro to him; and Moses took his wife Sephora and his two children; he placed them on an ass, and they departed for Egypt, Moses holding all the while the miraculous rod, called the Lord's rod, by reason of its performing so many wonders. His younger child had not been circumcised, and the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and he was in anger. Sephora took therefore a stone and inflicted upon him this painful operation. She then resolved to return to her father with her two sons. Moses thought that such was the will of God, who wished to make him comprehend that a strange woman and her young children would be an

encumbrance for a man charged with the direction of the people of God.

However, God, who had spoken to Moses at the foot of Mount Horeb, warned also his brother Aaron: "Depart," said He to him; "delay not to meet your brother in the desert; he will inform you of my designs." Aaron went forth immediately, and with full confidence in the Lord, he joined Moses at the foot of Mount Horeb. They embraced each other with all the marks of the most tender love.

Then Moses acquainted his brother of the orders of the Lord, His promises, and the charges He had given them both. Aaron believed, and he humbly submitted to the will of God, and with joy did he set himself to the deliverance of his nation.

The union of these two great men was the salvation of Israel. They went forth together into the land of Goshen, to inform the Israelites of the solemn mission wherewith they were honored. The Hebrews took great care not to confound their tribes, and to conserve their genealogy. The heads of the tribes and those of the families were called the elders, and in general deliberations, they represented the nation. These elders were called by the ambassadors of God to assemble. Aaron related to

them lengthily all that had taken place at Horeb, and Moses confirmed his mission by operating miracles, as the Lord had commanded him.

Their first undertakings were crowned with success. The Israelites believed that God had taken pity on His people, and that the time of their liberty had come. They knelt and adored God, and they committed themselves to the guidance of Moses, who was then eighty years of age, and his brother was eighty-three. (Exod. iv.)

It is admirable to consider the union of those two illustrious men ; but it is in a degree more so in Aaron, who conceived no jealousy towards his younger brother, who was chosen by God to be the true deliverer of Israel, whilst he was only his minister and his interpreter.

THE
CHILDREN OF THE PATRIARCHS
DELIVERED FROM BONDAGE.

STRANGE OBDDURACY.

I.

INCREASE OF LABOR.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1645.

IN freeing the Israelites from bondage, it was in the views of Providence that they should meet with insuperable obstacles and extraordinary contradictions. Nevertheless, the Israelites flattered themselves that Moses alone should undergo the difficulties. This base spirit caused Moses the deepest sorrow; so that he had less trouble to overcome the resistance of an impious tyrant than to hold in submission a nation qualified with the title of children of God. Moses and his brother entered on their mission with fortitude. They presented

themselves forthwith before Pharaoh, and said to him : "Hear, prince, the commands of the Lord, the God of Israel. Give my people the liberty to go forth into the desert to offer victims to the Lord." But this impious king responded : "Who is the Lord of whom you speak ? Wherefore should He exact that I obey His will, and that I give liberty to this people ? No ; I know not your God, and Israel shall not leave my kingdom." "Prince," replied they, "if *you* do not know the Lord, *we* know Him. He has commanded us to journey during three days from Egypt, to go into the desert and to immolate victims to Him. He must be obeyed ; and if we are rebellious, He will punish us either by plagues or by the avenging sword." "You alone have raised your people to revolt ; you have prevented them to pursue the works I have procured them. Begone from my presence, and resume your occupations."

Immediately Pharaoh assembled the officers who were appointed to oversee the works of the Israelites, and he said : "You see how this people multiply ; what would it be if they were at rest ? Far from lessening their labor, I shall increase it, so that they have no time for thought. Until now they have been furnished with the

necessary straw for bricks; make retrenchment, and let them go forth into the fields and gather it. They have not enough work, this is why they complain: 'Let us go into the desert and make sacrifices to God.' Let us crush them with labor, and allow them not to listen to impostors, who deceive them." Those orders were executed; they were overtasked with work, and they were obliged to supply the usual quantity of bricks. If they neglected doing so, they were thrown into prison; they were ill-treated, and even whipped like vile slaves. Not believing that the king could have issued orders so unjust, so contrary to reason, they rushed in crowds to the palace to report the treatment inflicted upon them. They were responded to with the direst contempt: "You have not enough work; you are in idleness. 'Let us go,' say you, 'into the desert, and let us offer sacrifices to our God.' Hence! to your work; I have said it; you shall not be supplied with straw, and you shall accomplish your ordinary task." Then they went to meet Moses and Aaron, who were stationed in the neighborhood of the palace, in order to learn the answer they should receive. "You are the cause," said they to him, in wrath, "that we are reduced to such affliction. We must die under the yoke

of the Egyptians. You have angered the king ; you have made us odious in his sight ; you have placed in the hands of this tyrant a sword whereby we shall perish. That God be your judge and ours !" (Exod. v.)

A minister of the Lord, or any superior who consecrates himself to the salvation of his brethren, must expect murmurs and discontent from them. Human zeal may be discouraged, and undertakings may be opposed by ingrates, who themselves should be interested in its success, and they abandon the cause. But such was not the character of Moses.

II.

A SERPENT.

MOSES listened patiently to the complaints of his people ; he did not reproach them, nor did he even endeavor to reason with them ; but he unbosomed himself to God. In such like manner should we act in the depth of our troubles. "O Lord," said he, with a tender liberty ; "why should you thus continue to afflict your people ? Why did you send me to promise them your assistance ? No sooner had I informed Pharaoh of your orders than this impious prince, instead of obeying you, added

cruelty to cruelty." The Lord tempered the grief of Moses by this answer: "I choose you to be the minister of my vengeance; I have heard the lamentations of the children of Israel. Go amongst them and say: Here is what the Lord of our fathers has said: I am the Lord; I shall deliver you from captivity; I shall sever the chains which bind you. You shall be my people, and I am your God. Remember, that I shall remove the obstacles which retain you in bondage. I shall lead you into the promised land. Those things shall come to pass, for I am the Lord." What a consoling answer! How good is God to speak thus to His servants. Moses was fortified by those solacing words; he repeated them faithfully to his people, but they remained insensible towards him, so plunged were they in the depths of bitterness by the arduous labor that overwhelmed them. The Lord said again to Moses, "Go, present yourself to Pharaoh, and tell him to let the children of Israel depart from his kingdom." "Ah! Lord," answered Moses, "the children of Israel, my brethren, do not deign to hear me. When I shall speak to them through you, how can I make myself heard by an impious king, I who have not the gift of speech?" "Go," said the Lord to him, "now I establish you the

god of Pharaoh, and your brother shall be your prophet and your organ. It is true that Pharaoh will only obey in spite of himself, but I shall abandon him, if he refuse to acknowledge me, and if his heart harden. I shall extend my hand to my people, and I shall liberate them as a victorious army, and by the most brilliant wonders of my Almighty. The Egyptians know that I am the Lord, who will chastise them, and who will free the children of Israel, despite them." Moses and Aaron hastened to execute the orders of God. They presented themselves before the king, and they renewed their demand. Pharaoh desired them to operate miracles. Then, in presence of the king and his court, Aaron cast the rod of Moses, and it changed into a serpent; but Pharaoh was not satisfied with this miracle, and he called his magicians and his enchanters, the chiefs of whom were Jannes and Mambres: the latter by the power of the demon, or rather by their enchantments, imitated the miracle of the servants of God, but their triumph was not of long duration; for the serpent formed by the rod of Aaron devoured those of the magicians. On seeing this, the king became more hardened, and the God of Israel was neither recognized nor obeyed. (Exod. v., vi., vii.)

Let us here admire the goodness of God, His patience and His justice; and let us deplore the hard-heartedness and the impiety of this prince, who dared to deny the Master of the elements, and to disobey His orders by his obduracy. Soon we shall see him cause his own ruin. Such is the end of all obdurate sinners.

III.

BLOOD, FROGS, GNATS, AND FLIES.

God, in His infinite goodness, endeavored to convert the unbelieving prince by operating miracles; but terrible plagues and dreadful chastisement were henceforward and successively to take place, and they were to be proportionate to the obduracy of the prince and his subjects. These were the ten plagues of Egypt. Abiding by the order of God, Moses and Aaron went early in the morning on the banks of the river, where Pharaoh was in the habit of walking; they asked him to allow the people to go forth into the desert to offer sacrifices to God, but he again refused to do so. Then Aaron, in the presence of the king and his courtiers, struck the waters of the river, and immediately they changed into blood. The waters became corrupted, and the fish perished therein. The

Egyptians could no longer drink of those waters, and they were reduced to the necessity of digging wells from distance to distance, so as to obtain water fit for use. This first plague lasted seven days.

A river of blood ! What a marvel ! But the king and his subjects still remained in their obduracy, and they were not converted. Thus do the wicked refuse to acknowledge the salutary terrors which God manifests to warn them of their danger. Pharaoh refused then to let them go forth into the desert, and Moses told him that he was about inflicting a new plague, but his threat was in vain, and, according to his order, Aaron stretched his hand over the marshes, the rivers, and the streams, and all Egypt was instantly covered with frogs ; they spread into the palace of the king, in his apartment, and even in his bed. The dwellings of his servants and those of his subjects were infested thereof ; they swarmed in the kitchens, on the tables, and the very meals were be-gnawed by them ; but they seemed to know the dwellings of the Hebrews ; they respected them, and they entered not therein. In the midst of such a calamity, Pharaoh called Moses and his brother, and begged of them to deliver him from this enormous quantity of frogs, and

that he would then give them their liberty. "I shall do as you say," answered Moses, "in order that you acknowledge that our God is the true God." Moses prayed, his prayers were heard, and those troublesome reptiles instantly ceased to exist. The Egyptians made such heaps of them that the corruption therefrom caused during several days a most noxious smell. Those frogs represent persons who afflict the Church by their disputes and their discussions.

Moses had too readily relied upon the promise of Pharaoh; for scarcely had the latter been delivered from one plague, when this wicked prince hardened his heart again. Another punishment was therefore in store for him. By the order of the Lord, Aaron, armed with the rod of Moses, struck the dust of the ground, and instantly Egypt was covered with such a thick cloud of gnats, that it seemed as though all the sand in the kingdom had been changed into a frightful multitude of those insects. They tormented both men and beasts, and it was impossible to banish them. Until then, Pharaoh's magicians had operated the same wonders by their enchantment; withal, they could not, like Moses, destroy them. On witnessing this third plague, they found themselves completely impotent, and astonished at the power wherewith

those two great men were invested, they avowed themselves vanquished, and they said to Pharaoh, "The finger of God is here." Gnats!—such is the stumbling-block of their power. God permitted this incapacity of the magicians, in order that Pharaoh should have no pretext of unbelief. But this unfaithful prince would not listen to his magicians when they said to him, Assuredly the finger of God is here. And he would not consent to the departure of the Israelites.

God in His mercy forewarned Pharaoh of a fourth plague, which would be still more terrible than the others. Moses spoke to the king, but he was deaf to his words. Then, innumerable swarms of flies of different species spread all over Egypt; after a short while, the whole country was covered with them. Pharaoh in his palace, the great men of the court in their superb dwellings, the citizens, and the people in the country, were all equally tormented, and often mortally stung by them. Every thing was destroyed and corrupted by their dangerous bites, and the land, far and wide, swarmed with them. To make Pharaoh fully aware that the hand of God was upon him, he was informed how the land of Gessen was exempt from all these plagues, but he would not give in to such striking evidences.

However, the calamity was so great, that the king had again recourse to the ordinary remedy, and he called for Moses and Aaron ; and when they were both in his presence : “ Go, said he, and sacrifice to your God ! but why leave my states ? ” “ Prince,” said they, “ the animals which are your gods are to be our victims. If your subjects see us spill the blood of these pretended divinities they will stone us to death.” “ Well then, be it so,” replied Pharaoh ; “ go sacrifice in the desert ; but above all, pray for me, so that God deliver me from those cruel insects.” “ Prince,” responded Moses, on leaving the palace, “ I shall implore the Lord, and the plague will disappear ; but do you keep your promise, and let us accomplish the commands of our God.” And Moses prayed, and instantly all the flies vanished. But, strange blindness ! when Pharaoh was delivered of this plague, he refused to fulfil his promise. (Exod. vii., viii.)

In the midst of these terrible chastisements, we ever behold the goodness of God. It would have been easy for God to immediately have sent lions to exterminate this obstinate prince ; but no, He had pity on the weakness of men ; His first chastisements are slight, but at length they become terrible in His wrath.

IV.

THE MURRAIN, THE ULCERS, AND
THE HAIL.

By the four first plagues, God had only, as it were, manifested His anger. Until then, but a few drops of the cup of affliction had been spilled !

By order of God, Moses again presented himself before Pharaoh, and he warned him of the dreadful calamity which was to overwhelm his subjects if he persisted in refusing the Israelites to depart. Pharaoh would not hear him, and full soon were the menaces of Moses realized. An epidemy spread all over Egypt : horses, mules, camels, oxen, and sheep alike perished. The Israelites did not lose a single beast. Pharaoh took information of this fact, and learned its veracity ; yet he persisted in his disobedience, and he refused to let the people of God depart out of Egypt. Is it possible, that after such prodigious miracles, Pharaoh's heart should yet be unmoved ? But no, his obduracy continued to increase.

Another plague soon followed, and Moses and Aaron, by the order of God, endeavored to overcome Pharaoh ; but it was of no avail. Then Moses took ashes, and sprinkled it to-

wards heaven, and, immediately, men and animals, throughout the kingdom, were afflicted with ulcers, which covered their bodies. The magicians, who were always present at the interviews of the servants of God with Pharaoh, were so cruelly inflicted with this distemper, that they were full of confusion and trouble. At length, Pharaoh merited by his wickedness the terrible vengeance of the sovereign Judge. But before this last punishment, whereby he should perish, God prepared others for him, the abuse of which made him unpardonable. Moses was grieved at his obduracy, and he tried once more to soften his heart. He rose early in the morning and begged of him, in the name of the Almighty, to let the Israelites go into the desert, and he told him that if he did not obey, the most dreadful afflictions would fall upon him and his people. These entreaties were not heard. Then Moses raised his hand to heaven, and immediately, the firmament was covered with dense clouds; the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and a most dreadful hail fell causing so much destruction, that, since the beginning of the monarchy, Egypt had never witnessed such a scene. Men and beasts alike perished; every thing was destroyed, herbs and plants were crushed to the ground, the

trees were rent asunder; and whilst all this took place, the land of Gessen remained tranquil, and seemed sheltered from this terrible plague. After such a severe chastisement, one would hope to see Pharaoh converted. True, he demanded the presence of Moses and Aaron. "I have sinned," said he, "the Lord is just; my people and I are impious. Pray then, to the Lord to stay the storm, the thunder, and the lightning, and the hail; then depart, for I shall no longer retain you." "Well, then," answered Moses, "when I shall have left the city, I shall raise my hand toward heaven; I shall invoke the Lord, and the hail shall cease, and the thunder will no longer be heard; thereby you will acknowledge that our God is the master of earth."

Moses left Pharaoh and the city, and every thing came to pass as he had predicted, but the king's heart was hardened again. Seeing the storm quelled, he would not allow the children of Israel to depart, as God had ordained it, and as Pharaoh had promised them. (Exod. ix.)

This is a figure of those hardened sinners who promise repentance when God shows His wrath, but who persist meanwhile in their impenitence.

V.

THE LOCUSTS AND THE DARKNESS.

“THE chastisements which I inflict in my mercy,” said the Lord to Moses, “increase the hard-heartedness of Pharaoh and that of his counsellors ; if they do not profit by it, it is their fault ; but, at least, they will be a means of enlightening you and your children ; you will relate to them all the wonderful things I have wrought against your enemies, the Egyptians, and you will say that I am the Lord. Continue to speak to Pharaoh on my part.” Moses accompanied his brother to the palace, and spoke to the king in a firm and resolute tone, and, threatening him with terrible afflictions, he abruptly left him, with an air of indignation which surprised the guilty king and his courtiers. “Prince,” said the latter to him, “how long shall we suffer by these dreadful calamities ? Let those people depart ; let them immolate to their God. Delay will cause the ruin of our country.” Then the king recalled Moses and Aaron, and said to them : “Well, I shall permit you to depart, but name me those who should go thither ?” “All,” answered Moses ; “men, women, and children, maidens

and aged persons! We shall also take our flocks and our herds with us, for it is to be the great solemnity of the Lord our God." "This is what you have concealed so artfully, under pretext of offering victims to your God. But it shall not be! Let the men go celebrate this festival, if they wish, and hope for no more." Thus spake the prince, and the servants of God were ignominiously driven from the presence of Pharaoh.

Moses stretched his hand over the land, and during a day and a night there blew, by order of the Lord, a dry and burning wind, which brought forth an immense cloud of locusts. They fastened themselves to the trees and to the grain; they devoured the grass of the fields, the fruit and the leaves, in a short space of time; the finest season of the year was changed into a gloomy winter. Pharaoh was again discouraged, and he besought the return of Moses and Aaron. On beholding them, he assumed an air of consternation. "I have sinned against the Lord and against you," said he, "but pardon me this fault, and pray the God of Israel to deliver me from this horrible plague!" Moses went forth and prayed, and immediately a westerly wind arose and swept away all the locusts into the Red Sea.

But neither pardon nor chastisement changed the heart of this tyrant. How great, O God, is your goodness, your patience, and your mercy! You forewarn the sinner, and whilst you punish him you wish his good.

The continued obduracy of Pharaoh drew forth upon him another plague. It was not as destructive as the others, but it was more terrible. By the order of God, Moses raised his hand towards heaven, and suddenly all Egypt was covered with an extraordinary darkness which spread fear and awe amongst the people. The sunshine could not penetrate this darkness, much less any artificial light; but from time to time it was lit up with a momentary fire that presented to the eye the most hideous spectres, the most frightful forms, lugubrious groans and horrible hissings struck the ear, and one might have dreaded, at every moment, to be devoured by the wild beasts of Egypt. During this calamity the Israelites enjoyed both light and tranquillity.

This ninth plague lasted three entire days, and the prince made no effort to humble himself. However, he demanded the presence of Moses and Aaron and said to them: "Go then into the desert, but let your flocks and herds, your women and your children remain here."

"No, prince," replied Moses, "we must leave Egypt with the victims necessary for our sacrifices; naught shall remain, not even the hoof of the smallest of our lambs. On hearing these words, Pharaoh became furious, and he revoked the permission he had given. "Retire from my presence," said he to Moses, "and never again appear before me. If you have the audacity to re-enter my palace, I shall have you at once put to death." "No," said Moses, "we shall not return without express orders, and I shall not depart before I warn you of afflictions greater still than all the rest, if you do not prevent it by a prompt obedience." And the minister of God told him, how dreadful should be the tenth plague. Then he withdrew, full of just indignation. Pharaoh persisted in his disobedience, and the Israelites did not depart. (Exod. x., xi.)

What a strange and dreadful obduracy in this prince! This darkness which seemed to harden the heart of Pharaoh and his subjects figures the obduracy of the wicked, which at length leads them to eternal darkness, where disorder and desolation reign forever; on the other hand, a pure and gentle light from heaven will infallibly lead the good to the regions of bliss, like the Israelites.

VI.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB.

GOD came again to the assistance of His servant. "The plague with which you have threatened Pharaoh," said He to him, "is near at hand; and after its accomplishment, I shall deliver my people from Egypt. Tell them to dispose themselves accordingly; and let men, women, and children go into the neighborhood of Ramesses, in the present month, and let them take thither their flocks and their herds. Before leaving their dwellings, they shall ask the Egyptians, their neighbors, for gold and silver vases, and precious ornaments, to be used at the ceremony of immolation. They will readily give them. You will tell the Israelites that I give them those ornaments in payment for their long and hard labor. Tell them that this month, marked for their departure from Egypt, shall henceforth be, for them, the first of the year;* and that on the tenth day of this month, each of the elders or the fathers of the

* This month, called Nisan, might correspond with the latter half of our month of March, and with the first of that of April. It was, for the Jews, the first month of the ecclesiastical year; their civil year began in autumn.

families shall put aside a male lamb without blemish ; in default of a lamb, they shall take a kid. If the family assembled be not large enough to consume the lamb at one meal, they shall associate with them some of their neighbors. The lamb, put aside on the tenth of the month, shall be kept until the fourteenth, and on the night of this day, the head of the family shall immolate to God. My will is, that all the children of Israel participate in this ceremony. They shall keep some of the blood of the victim, and dip therein some branches of hyssop, and they shall sprinkle the tops of their doorposts with this blood. The lamb shall be roasted whole,—the body, the head, even the entrails. At this repast they shall use unleavened bread. With the flesh of the lamb they shall eat wild and bitter lettuce. It shall all be consumed in the same family, and if any remain, it shall be reduced to ashes with the bones. Here now are the necessary dispositions to partake of this repast : my people shall be dressed as travellers, with their loins girded and shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. They shall eat standing and in haste, for it is the *Pasch*, that is to say, the passage of the Lord. I have chosen the night to pass through Egypt and to strike with death the

first-born of the Egyptians, men as well as animals. This is the moment I have chosen for my vengeance against all the divinities of Egypt; for I am the Lord and the God of all nations. Those alone shall be saved whose doors will be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb.

“This day shall be as an eternal memorial of my power and mercy, and in remembrance of which you shall establish a solemnity, which from generation to generation shall pass to your last descendants. During seven days, you shall eat of unleavened bread, and whosoever amongst ye be guilty of eating any other shall be exterminated in your midst. The first and the last of these days shall be solemn, and no servile work shall be performed; during the five other days they can perform their usual occupations.”

Moses and Aaron reassembled the people of Israel and informed them of the commands of the Almighty, entering into the minutest details, in order that nothing should be forgotten regarding the different circumstances pointed out to them.

“In conclusion, it is not,” added they, “a transient ceremony as one of a day, for it must be renewed every year, and be perpetuated from

generation to generation. You shall celebrate this festival when you are in possession of that beautiful land which has been promised to our fathers. And when your children will ask the signification of this religious practice, answer them that it is the Pasch, or the victim of the Lord; when at the time of our captivity, God smote the first-born of the Egyptians, whilst he spared the Israelites." After hearing those commands, the children of Israel bowed their heads, they prostrated themselves, and they adored the Lord. (Exod. xii.)

The Christians also celebrate the passage of the Lord; but no longer, it is true, by the eating of a carnal lamb. This passage of goodness, of clemency, and of grace is celebrated by the reception of the true Paschal Lamb—Jesus Christ.

VII.

EIGHTH FIGURE.

THE sacrifice of the paschal lamb offers us a striking figure of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And indeed, this paschal lamb should be spotless. Jesus Christ is the true lamb without spot; He is the essence of purity and holiness. The bones of the paschal lamb were not to be

broken. Our Saviour died upon a cross and none of His bones were broken. The paschal lamb should be eaten in the same house, with unleavened bread and bitter lettuce. We eat the flesh of Jesus Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, in the same House—the Catholic Church. We eat it with the unleavened bread of purity, charity, and with the bitter lettuce—mortification and penitence.

To eat the paschal lamb their loins should be bound, they should have a staff in hand, and shoes on, in order to be in readiness to journey to the promised land. To receive our Lord, we must be pure and chaste; we must have no hold on the world, figured by Egypt; we must yearn for the possession of our heavenly home. The houses marked with the blood of the lamb, were not doomed by the angel of the Lord. The souls marked with the blood of Jesus Christ received worthily, shall not be punished by the sovereign Judge on the day of vengeance.

No stranger could share the eating of the paschal lamb unless he were circumcised. No one can partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ if he be not regenerated by the water of baptism.

Let us often receive in communion, the true

spotless Lamb that delivers us from the slavery of sin, and from everlasting death. Let us receive Him with love, with humility, and with hope, like travellers who despise this earth of sin, but who long for the promised land, where happiness reigns forever.

VIII.

A UNIVERSAL CRY.

THE captivity of the Israelites had lasted for 215 years from the arrival of Jacob in Egypt, and 433 years since the vocation of Abraham, or since the first alliance made with this holy patriarch until the second under the ministry of Moses on Mount Sinai. The term then of slavery had been completed, and God accomplished His promise accordingly. The children of Israel were now about putting into execution the precept that Moses had given them on the part of God. It was in the middle of the night, when all was calm and silent, that the Sovereign Master of the lives of men, sent His angels to accomplish the sentence pronounced against Egypt. And at that moment the holy spirits smote the first-born of the Egyptians, from Pharaoh's son and heir to the first-born

of the last of his slaves condemned to hard labor, or to the rigors of prison. Nor were the first-born of animals spared! but the ministers of the vengeance of the Almighty respected the houses whose doors had been marked with the blood of the lamb.

Such was the accomplishment of the dreadful decree of the Lord against the Egyptians, and not one was excepted therefrom. In every family there was a corpse, and that corpse was the first-born, the support, the hope of the family. What a tumultuous confusion of men and women in despair! A universal cry was heard throughout Egypt. Pharaoh, filled with fear and woe, arose at midnight with his courtiers, and in spite of the darkness, he sent for Moses and Aaron, and they immediately came, and the prince without menacing as before, said: "Depart in haste, you and the children of Israel, and sacrifice to your God as you think proper; take thither your cattle and your sheep; I shall grant you all that you have hitherto besought of me; but before you depart, bless me, and obtain for me the blessing of God." And the people, overwhelmed with the afflictions which this wicked prince had drawn down upon them by his inflexibility, eagerly besought the speedy departure of the children of God; "for,"

said they, "if they remain here any longer, we shall all perish." (Exod. xii.)

Thus does God triumph over the wicked; thus does He loosen the chains of the oppressed. And Pharaoh and his counsellors had to yield to the power of the Almighty, and they could not resist the last and most terrible plague which had been inflicted upon them in God's just wrath.

Why did they disobey at first, when the miracles wrought against them were slight? Your punishments and your rewards are admirable, O Lord, because you are ever good and just!

DEPLORABLE RESULT OF STRANGE OBDURACY,

I.

THREE MILLIONS OF CAPTIVES SET AT LIBERTY.

ON leaving the king, Moses repaired to Ramesses; it was at an early hour, and he instantly gave orders for a speedy departure. The eagerness of the Egyptians, who believed themselves on the eve of death, was such that

moments seemed years to them, and they were not satisfied till they were certain that the Israelites had passed the frontiers.

Meanwhile, the latter hastened to make preparations, and they demanded of the Egyptians their gold and silver vases, their sumptuous apparel, and their costly jewels, pursuant to the order that the Sovereign Distributor had given them, so that they should be paid for their hard work, and compensated for the houses and land they were leaving behind. This departure was so precipitate, that if Moses had not cautioned them of it beforehand, they would not have been able to take those urgent measures, but they had had time to prepare themselves for it.

Time was also of great moment to Moses, for he had to organize the march of a whole nation, numbering six hundred thousand men, without reckoning women and children, and including the latter with the aged people, and a quantity of slaves and of Egyptians who had been converted by the miracles of the Most High, and had joined the children of Israel and had submitted to their laws. Altogether, there was a multitude of three million persons. Innumerable herds of cattle and sheep driven by herdsmen followed, as also, vans and beasts of

burden charged with provisions and spoils that the terror-stricken Egyptians had left in their hands. With this large number of equipages they departed from the land of their captivity. Moses had been in such haste to organize the march of his people, that they went forth with their bread half kneaded, and without being raised. They had to tie it up in bags, and carry it on their shoulders, and at their first encampment they made unleavened bread of it. The alarmed Egyptians had not allowed them time to make any other provisions for the first days of their long campaign.

The Hebrew people left then the land of their captivity. They were divided by tribes and by families, and they went forth under the protection of God and the guidance of Moses. O, wonder! there was not one sick person amongst them!

Moses, with a watchful eye to all things, had the mortal remains of Joseph placed on a chariot to carry them back to the tomb of his fathers, according to the last words of the holy patriarch. "God will visit you," he had said, "and do not forget to carry my remains among you."

On they marched in good order, with the joy that hope gives to travellers, who journey towards their own country.

But little did they know how long their pil

grimage should last before they entered the land of Canaan. (Exod. xii.)

The Egyptians who kept the Israelites in bondage, figure sin that keeps us in the slavery of the devil, and that makes us worthy of the pains of hell. The departure from Egypt represents the liberty that Jesus Christ has obtained for us.

II.

THE PILLAR OF FIRE.

THE Hebrews had left Rāmesses, and under the guidance of Moses, they marched on in good order towards the east of this city, and in the direction of Socoth, avoiding thereby to pass by the land of the Philistines, which was situated at the north of Egypt. From the beginning of their march, God gave to His people new proofs of His protection. He formed a pillar, the basis of which was very wide, and the summit thereof reaching the clouds. It was composed of thick and condensed vapors. During the day, this pillar had the colors of a beautiful cloud, and at night it became as a bright fire, and it was as luminous as the sun. One of the heavenly spirits, and minister of the Lord, was charged with the direction of this cloud, which was destined to serve as a guide

to the Hebrews, to screen them from the heat of the sun, and to light them at night. When they were to continue their march, the pillar would rise from amidst the camp and would place itself on the pavilion of those who were heading the tribes, or it stopped, according as they were to march or encamp.

These miracles lasted as long as they wandered in the wilderness, and, night and day, they reminded them of the protection of God.

O, admirable goodness of Divine Providence! O, God! infinitely good towards his children! And yet this people offended their benefactor! They complained, they murmured, they were guilty of idolatry, of insubordination.

The pillar stopped at Socoth, and the Israelites halted for some time. Moses spoke to them again of the orders of God; he recalled to their minds the law commanding the celebration of the Pasch or Easter, every year in that same month, in remembrance of their miraculous deliverance, and by offering a lamb, the night of the fourteenth day.

“When the Lord will have brought you into the land promised to our fathers,” added Moses, “you will all consecrate to him the first-born, men as well as animals. The men shall be redeemed, and the animals shall be immolated

Your children will ask you the reason of this law, saying, 'What is the meaning of this religious ceremony?' and you will answer: 'The Lord our God has delivered us from bondage, and He has withdrawn us from the land of Egypt, by the sole strength of His will. When the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, that he resisted the orders of the Almighty, God struck with death the first-born of the Egyptians, sparing those of His people. It is in remembrance of this event that we shall offer up to the Lord the first-born of animals, and that we shall redeem the first-born of our children,' (Exod. xii., xiii.)

The Jews were commanded to immolate their first-born, as we are recommended to consecrate to him our youth, our first thoughts, our first desires. Let us not wait till the decline of life to offer ourselves to God. How do we know that He will accept the fruits of a feeble and deferred repentance?

III.

TWO ARMIES IN PRESENCE OF EACH OTHER.

FROM Socoth they advanced, keeping always in view the miraculous pillar, to Etham, and on

the third day since they journeyed from Egypt, they reached the borders of the Red Sea.

The Egyptians, meanwhile, had buried the victims of the vengeance of the Most High; they were weighed down with grief. Pharaoh, on the other hand, was full of indignation when he heard that the Israelites had not only taken away their own spoils, but also those of the Egyptians; he believed himself trifled with, and he resolved to make one last effort to renew the captivity of the Hebrews. "What have we done?" exclaimed he; "we should not have set at liberty a people so useful to us. But we have still time to pursue them." And by his order, two hundred thousand men were set on foot, fifty thousand horses were equipped, six hundred wagons charged with arms, the state chariot of the king was in readiness, the generals were heading their troops, and Pharaoh commanded the army.

But the Israelites had gone forth under the protection of the Almighty, and as the Egyptians did not exactly know the direction they had taken, they speedily followed their footsteps. In the evening of the third day they came in sight of the Hebrews, who were assembled at a short distance from the Red Sea. It was late, and as the Egyptians saw them

hemmed in between their army and the sea, they thought it fit to defer the attack until the next day. At the sight of this formidable army, the Hebrews believed themselves irrevocably lost; fear took full possession of their souls, and they uttered loud cries to Heaven; and Moses, their leader, the chosen man of God, had to suffer the most bitter reproaches from them; they assembled tumultuously around him, and they said: "Likely there were not enough graves for us in Egypt, since you have led us here to be buried in the burning sands of this desert. Wherefore have you dealt thus with us? Did we not say to you: Let us alone that we may serve our masters? It had been better for us had we obeyed the Egyptians than die in the wilderness by the sword of our enemies." Moses was not discouraged, and he excused his people in consideration of their mortal anxiety: "Fear not," said he to them, "have courage and submit yourselves to the will of God; this day you will behold the wonderful things which God will operate in your favor. You now see for the last time all those Egyptians who are armed against us, for to-morrow they shall have all perished! The Lord is with us, do not anger Him; remain in peace under His protection." (Exod. xiv.)

The language of the Hebrews to Moses, was a proof of their ingratitude to the Lord, and of their insubordination to Moses, His minister; but the latter had to bear with all these trials, which were merely to serve as a prelude to others far more afflicting.

IV.

THE DESTRUCTION OF A WHOLE ARMY.

MOSES knelt before the throne of mercy to implore forgiveness for such wicked murmurs. His prayers were heard, and moreover, the Lord told him the means whereby he should deliver his people from their enemies.

He therefore immediately sought the children of Israel, and he commanded them to be ready to continue their march. Then the angel of the Lord, who directed the pillar, placed it in the rear of the camp between the two armies, so that its luminous side lighted the way of the Israelites, whilst it appeared as a dark cloud to the Egyptians, and it concealed from them the movements of the Israelites. Hereupon, Moses, in the name of Him who created heaven, the earth, and the waters, stretched out his hand over the sea, the waters were

divided, and a dry path was made for the Israelites, for there rose a burning wind that dried up and hardened the bottom of the deep, and made it firm under the feet of his people.

The Israelites entered this miraculous route, whereon no foot had ever before trod; and whilst the waters remained suspended like high walls on both sides, they passed, from evening till three o'clock in the morning, safely to the opposite shore. It was scarcely dawn of day when the Egyptians perceived the Hebrews escaping. They followed them speedily. The entire army,—men, horses, chariots, and the king took the same route.

Meanwhile, the Israelites had landed safely, under the guidance of the pillar that also served the Egyptians as a point of attraction, for they were resolved to overtake their enemy. But this was the moment of God's vengeance! All of a sudden the pillar opened, and they saw the angel of the Lord threatening them with God's wrath. The thunder rolled through the firmament, and a hail of burning hot stones killed the horses, destroyed the chariots, and spread confusion and terror in the army; the shouts and the clamor of men in despair rent the air, and they cried, "Let us fly from the Hebrews, let us cease to pursue them; their God is

against us ; He fights for them." It was too late ; and as they began to retrace their steps, the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea." The waters were instantly united, and they were all swallowed up, without one soul being able to escape. Thus was Israel delivered by a miracle of the Almighty from the persecutions of the Egyptians. By the will of the Most High, the waves washed the dead bodies and the war-stores ashore, and with thanks to God for those rich spoils, Moses distributed them to the different tribes and families.

This event strengthened the faith of the Hebrews, and the authority of Moses was once more firmly established. (Exod. xiv.)

With admiration do we contemplate the Jews saved from the depths of the sea, and we heed not the salvation of a soul in this present age. On the one hand, it is only Pharaoh vanquished ; on the other, it is the devil. How glorious it was for the Almighty to hear Pharaoh exclaim : "Let us fly from the children of Israel ; their God fights for them ;" but how much more glorious it is for Him to hear the devil say : "Let us abandon this soul, for God is with it."

V.

A SUBLIME CANTICLE.

WHEN the Israelites were delivered from the Egyptians, they were penetrated with gratitude towards the Almighty; and Moses, availing himself of their happy dispositions, bade them sing to the Lord a sublime hymn of thanksgiving.

“Let us sing to Jehovah a canticle of praise, because He has manifested His power and His glory by precipitating into the sea the horse and the horseman. The Lord is my strength, and the object of my praise: for He is my salvation. He is my God, and I shall glorify Him; He is the God of my fathers, and I shall publish His miracles. The Lord has combated for me, His name is Almighty. He has buried in the sea, Pharaoh, his chariots, his generals, and all his army; the waters have swallowed them up; they have dropped as a stone to the bottom of the sea. O Lord, you have manifested your power, and your strength has annihilated the enemy. By the grandeur of your majesty you exterminate your adversaries; you show them your anger, and they are dispersed as straws. At your bidding, O God Almighty,

the menacing waves have suspended their course, and they have risen like two ramparts in the midst of the dryness of the sea. The enemy said, 'I shall pursue the children of Israel; I shall overtake them, and make them my prisoners: I shall divide their spoils, and I shall satisfy my anger. I will draw my sword, and I shall exterminate them.' But you, O Lord, have breathed upon the waters, and they have fallen like lead to the bottom of the foaming waters. What God can be compared to you, O Jehovah! You alone are great and holy—terrible in your vengeance; you alone are worthy of praise in the wonderful things you have wrought. You stretch forth your hand, and the sea swallows up the Egyptians. In your mercy, you became the protector of the people whom you have redeemed; and by your strength you have conducted them to their blissful home.* Nations rose up and were angry; sorrows took hold on the inhabitants of Philisthiim. Then were the princes of Edom troubled; trembling seized on the stout men of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan became stiff. Strike them, O Lord, with consternation, make them immovable as the

* Here Moses speaks prophetically of the future, and as though it had already come to pass.

rocks, whilst your chosen band pass out of their hands. Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thy inheritance, in thy most pious habitation which thou hast made, O Lord; thy sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever. The presumptuous Pharaoh, followed by his chariots and his cavalry, rode into the midst of the suspended waves; and, at the word of the Lord, they were buried therein, but Israel was saved from the waters of the sea." (Exod. xv.)

This canticle was sung by two great choirs; Moses and Aaron being at the head of that of the men; Mary, their sister, directed that of the women, and they bore timbrels in their hands.

The chorus was: "Let us sing a canticle of praise to Jehovah, because He has manifested His power and His glory by burying in the sea the horse and the horseman." They sang all day to the glory of the great Liberator of Israel. The day on which the army was destroyed, was the seventh of Easter, and it was commanded to be celebrated as the first, on which died all the first-born of the Egyptians.

What admirable sentiments in this canticle of Moses! Let us also acknowledge the power,

the goodness, and the mercy of God towards us. Let us, like Moses, show our gratitude; let us glorify Him with all the sincerity of our hearts.

THE
CHILDREN OF THE PATRIARCHS
AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT SINAI.

MIRACLES IN THE DESERT OF ARABIA.

I.

THE WATERS OF MARA.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1645.

ON the day after the great victory gained over the Egyptians, through the protection of the God of armies, Moses, following the movement of the pillar, gave the signal for the departure. The people left the borders of the Red Sea, and advanced towards the deserts of Sur. On they marched in the wilderness of Ithan, in the midst of the burning sands of this country, without finding any water to drink. At length, on the night of the 22d of the first month, they discovered several wells, the water of which was extremely bitter, by reason

of which the place was called Mara—*bitterness*. Exhausted with fatigue, the people cried, "Who will give us water to drink?" And all at once the desert resounded with murmurs against Moses. Inconstant people! they have already forgotten the wonders operated in their favor by the Almighty! However, the servant of God had recourse to God, and the Lord showed him a kind of wood, and He told him to throw it into the water, so as to render it fit for use. Moses acted accordingly; and by the power and goodness of God, it became sweet and agreeable to the taste; all the Israelites drank of it, and they ceased to murmur: but this was not honoring the Lord as He merited. And He reproached them gently, saying, "If you listen to the voice of the Lord your God; if you walk in His way with simplicity and uprightness; if you keep His commandments, I shall not afflict you by plagues as I did Egypt. I am the Lord thy God, and I shall protect you from all evil." After this gentle reprimand, the Israelites left Mara, and they arrived at Elim, where they found seventy palm-trees and twelve wells of pure water. (Exod. xv.)

The wood thrown into the water of Mara, represents the Cross of Christ that renders the

bitter waters of tribulations sweet and agreeable, and that enables us to suffer, with patience, the trials of this life.

II.

THE QUAILS.

It would seem that the Israelites had wandered some time in the neighborhood of the wells, for having left Elim, they only reached the desert of Sin, which is situated between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth of the second month of the year, and, therefore, it was precisely one month since their departure from Egypt. Unfortunately, after a long march, their provisions were exhausted and they murmured as before. They surrounded Moses and his brother Aaron, and the most mutinous amongst them said: "Far better would it have been for us to die in Egypt, by the hand of the Lord. Why have you brought us into this dreadful wilderness where we shall all perish with our wives and children?" And they loudly lamented their flesh-pots of Egypt and the bread they had in abundance. Moses had again recourse to the Lord, and he reprimanded the people: "This very night," said he to them, "you shall be witness of another miracle of the goodness of God, who has delivered

you out of Egypt, He will give you meat for which you so much long, and to-morrow morning He will manifest His glory in a still more wonderful manner. He will send you bread from Heaven. He has heard your murmurs. But why complain so seditiously?" After these promises, Moses bade his brother assemble the children of Israel, in order that they should hear the confirmation of these new engagements.

Aaron was yet speaking when all eyes were turned in the direction of the wilderness, and the Lord appeared in a cloud of glory, and He confirmed all that His servant had said. And indeed, at night, a cloud of quails covered the camp of the Hebrews, and they took them eagerly and made of them a delicate and abundant repast. (Exod. xvi.)

But this was transient; the Lord had granted them this delicious food, so that they should forget the coarse food of Egypt.

III.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN.

WHEN Moses informed the Hebrews that God intended to supply them with meat, he spoke to them also of a bread that was to come from Heaven. The next morning, at an early hour, they perceived that all the environs of the camp

were covered with a white dew upon which were clustered innumerable particles in the form of small beads. This dew had some resemblance to the hoarfrost that covers the surface of the earth in winter. Such a wonderful spectacle struck the people with surprise, and they said to each other, "*Man-hu?*" which means : what is this ? " This is," said Moses to them, " the bread that the Lord your God has promised you for food, and listen to His orders hereupon : You shall gather each day as much of this dew as you may need, an omer (about three quarts), the portion of one man ; in each family, they shall gather, according to the number of persons in one tent." They immediately gathered it, and those who took a larger measure than was necessary, found on their return, that it was not more than usual. " You see," said Moses, " that it is useless for you to gather a double quantity, the Lord wishes you to depend on His providence ; let each one then take his share and reserve none for the morrow." They heeded not his advice, and some of them gathered the manna for the next day, but it spoiled and they could not make use of it. This disobedience excited the just indignation of the servant of God.

Abiding by the order of the Lord, they gathered, on the seventh day, a double quantity

of this food. They acquainted Moses of this precaution and he approved of it. "This is," said he, "the command of God : the seventh day is the Sabbath, a day of rest consecrated to the Lord. Gather then, to-day, double measure ; consume one part and keep the other for the next day, which is the holy day of rest." They followed this command, and the portion for the Sabbath kept perfectly well. Nevertheless some of them left their tents to gather the manna as on the preceding days, but there was none to be found. And the Lord said in His anger : "How long shall my laws be violated ? I have commanded the sanctification of the Sabbath, and I have permitted that each one should make double provision the day previous, and that each one should remain in his pavilion on the seventh day."

This miraculous food had to be gathered in the early morning before sunrise,—otherwise it melted. They ground it under a mill-stone and they bruised it in a mortar, so as to reduce it to a paste which was baked in the form of cakes. It had the taste of the finest flour kneaded with oil and honey. This manna is called the bread of angels, the bread of Heaven, delectable bread. Those whose piety rendered them agreeable to God, found in it whatsoever taste they wished.

It was a substitute for the most delicate, the most varied food. The Israelites were fed with this miraculous bread as long as they were in the desert. By the order of God, Moses charged Aaron, his brother, to take a measure of this manna and to keep it in a gold vase; later, it was to be placed in the magnificent tabernacle which should be built by the order of the Lord, in the midst of his people. (Exod. xvi.)

The Christians have an advantage over the Jews, inasmuch as they possess the true manna, the bread of Heaven. "I am," said our Saviour, "the bread of life; he who eats of this bread shall have life everlasting; this bread is my body which I give for the salvation of the world. Your fathers have eaten of the manna, and they died; but he who eateth this bread shall live for ever." (St. John vi., 33.)

IV.

NINTH FIGURE.

THE manna affords us a profound subject of consideration, and a true figure of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. For the Israelites, the manna was a food that came from Heaven. For the Christians, the Eucharist is a bread of Heaven, destined to be the food of their souls. The manna was only given to the people of

Israel after they had passed through the waters of the Red Sea. The holy Eucharist is only given to Christians after baptism, figured by the passage of Israel through the Red Sea.

The manna fell for the Israelites only. It flattered their different tastes and temperaments, but it did not save them from death. The Eucharist is given to Christians only. It strengthens the weak, it consoles the afflicted, and it is a sign of life everlasting.

The manna fell as long as the Israelites were in the desert, and when they arrived into the promised land it ceased.

The Eucharist is the food of Christians sojourning on earth; and when they are in Heaven, their true home, this food will also cease, and God, who has been veiled under the appearance of bread, will then appear to them in full glory.

Let us nourish our souls with this divine bread, which makes us the dwelling of God Himself. Let us cherish this heavenly food; it shows us the way to Heaven. Jesus Christ says: "He who eateth My body, and drinketh My blood, shall have life everlasting; and he shall rise triumphant on the last day." O, consoling words!

V.

THE ROCK OF HOREB.

It would seem impossible that the Israelites should henceforward want confidence in the Almighty, after the striking examples that had taken place. However, new wants disposed them to renew their murmurs. From the desert of Sin, where they had sojourned some time, they continued their march towards the desert of Sinai, and after a few days they reached Raphidim, near the mountain of Horeb. The pillar having stopped, their first care was to seek for springs and streams, but in vain. These children of the patriarchs had not inherited the faith and the confidence of their fathers. The want of water nigh excited them to despair, and they seditiously said to Moses: "Give us water, if you do not wish to see us die of thirst. Is it for this end you have taken us away from Egypt, with our children and our flocks?" Moses reproached them for their injustice towards him, and their impiety towards God. Then, addressing himself to the Lord: "What shall I do," cried he, "to satisfy this people? Pity them, and pity me, for they are ready to stone me to death!" The Lord, in

His ineffable goodness, heard the prayers of His servant, and He performed another miracle in favor of His people. "Fear not," said the Lord to Moses; "place yourself at the head of the camp; take the rod with which you struck the waters of the Nile; choose some of the heads of the tribes, and let them accompany you to Mount Horeb. I shall precede you thither. I shall be there in an invisible manner. With your rod you shall strike the rock, whence shall flow a stream of water, with which the people and their herds shall quench their thirst." Moses obeyed the orders of the Lord, in the presence of the elders of the tribes of Israel, and pure streams of water flowed from the hard rock, and they watered the dry and barren plains.

During the Israelites' long sojourn at Raphidim, or in the neighboring deserts, the waters regulated their course to their march; they followed them constantly, and supplied their wants without interruption.

The place where this miracle took place was called Temptation, because there the children of Israel had manifested their impiety so far as to say: "Is the Lord with us or not?" (Exod. xvii.)

Faithless people! How could they doubt

God's presence, after so many miracles of His divine assistance? And yet what goodness on the part of God! At the prayers of Moses, he granted them all that he asked for, despite their inconstancy.

VI.

FIGURE OF THE CROSS.

STRENGTHENED by this miraculous water, the Israelites were pursuing their course through the wilderness, when the Amalekites, descendants of Amalek, son of Elipha, and grandson of Esau, people of that part of Arabia lying eastward of the Jordan, came close upon them, and obstructed their passage onward. They formed a strong army, equipped and armed for an attack; but Moses, full of confidence in the God of armies, feared not this formidable encounter. He, therefore, selected a captain fit to head the people of God, and it was Josue, son of Nun, chief of the tribe of Ephraim. It was a difficult matter to organize an army with men totally undisciplined, and to lead them on against a powerful people, inured to war, and to open, in spite of their position, a passage to the land of Canaan. But Josue was the hero chosen by God for this glorious and important expedition, and for which He gave him the

necessary strength, courage, and knowledge. "The Lord," said Moses to Josue, "has destined you to be the captain of His troops ; take with you the bravest of the Israelites, and give battle to Amalek. To-morrow I shall be on the summit of Mount Horeb, with my miraculous rod."

Josue obeyed ; he took his men, and, acting according to the word of the servant of God, he gave battle to the Amalekites. On the other hand, Moses, accompanied by his brother Aaron and by Hur, placed himself on the mountain which commanded a view of the battle-field ; and whilst Josue valiantly combated the enemy, Moses prayed, with his hands stretched towards Heaven—whence all protection comes—thus forming the figure of the cross which should, at some future time, be so salutary to Christians, and so formidable to their enemies.

Meanwhile, Moses observed all that was taking place around the camp. He noticed, likewise, that so long as he held his hands uplifted the Israelites triumphed, and when with fatigue he would let them fall, Amalek seemed to gain advantage over the Israelites. Being thus obliged to keep his hands raised, they became heavy and benumbed ; his strength

failed him. Then Aaron and Hur, perceiving the exhaustion of this holy man, sat him down upon a stone, and, placing themselves by his side, they supported his arms; so that, experiencing no further lassitude, Moses' hands were raised towards Heaven till sunset, at which time the victory was won. The Amalekites were entirely defeated, and they no longer impeded the march of the people of God.

The Lord then commanded Moses to write the history of this event in a separate book; to relate therein the anathema pronounced against Amalek, and the implacable war which He declared against him. This manuscript should be given to Josue, thence to the judges and to the kings, until the time marked for the accomplishment of its decrees.

After this victory, Moses gave public thanksgiving to God. He raised an altar, to which he gave a Hebrew name, and which signifies—*The Lord is my glory*. He offered victims to the God of armies, saying: "The Lord hath sworn to exterminate the enemies of his people—the Amalekites—from generation to generation, until their name is effaced from the memory of men." (Exod. xvii.)

Life is a continued combat. At every step

we meet with enemies who would impede our passage to the true promised land.

How shall we be fortified for this continual struggle if it be not by prayer? In imitation of Moses, let us raise our supplicating hands towards Heaven, let the cross of our Saviour be our support, it will render us strong and victorious.

VII. .

A FAMILY MEETING.

THE miracles performed by God in favor of His people were soon known throughout foreign countries, but in no place were they spoken of with more interest and gladness than at Midian, in the family of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. Full of profound joy, the former took the wife of the servant of God and his two sons, and went forth on a journey to congratulate his son-in-law. He arrived at the foot of Mount Horeb, where the children of Israel were yet encamped. Jethro did not judge it proper to surprise this great man whom God had chosen to deliver His people, so he forewarned him of his coming by a messenger who had order to say: "Your father-in-law, your wife Sephora, and your two sons are impatiently waiting to see you." Moses hastened to meet his father-in-

law, before whom he prostrated himself; on the other hand, Jethro bent over Moses and embraced him tenderly. After Moses had given his wife and his children marks of his sincere affection, he led the travellers to his tent, and he related to them all the mighty things that God had wrought in favor of His people, and the victory they had just gained over the Amalekites. Jethro listened to this recital with profound emotion, and, more grateful than the children of Israel, he praised the goodness, the power, and the mercy of the Lord. "Blessed be the God of Israel," exclaimed he, "who hath broken the chains of His people, and hath delivered them from the persecutions of the Egyptians and from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Yes, O Lord, I confess you are the only true God, you have chastised the transgressors of your will. You alone are great and the mighty ruler of the world." Jethro not only praised the Lord, but, being priest of the Most High, he offered Him burnt-sacrifices, in gratitude. Aaron and the elders of Israel participated also in this happy union, and Moses having retained them, they all shared in the grand festivity prepared in honor and in the presence of the Lord. (Exod. xviii.)

Jethro, though a stranger, had no sooner

heard of the wonderful things operated by the Lord, in favor of His people, than he left the land of Midian and his occupation, to mingle, with the servant of God, his praise and thanksgiving; whilst the Israelites, the objects and the witnesses of this great solemnity, manifested, nevertheless, their insubordination, their ingratitude, and even their idolatry.

VIII.

A SALUTARY COUNSEL.

THE gladness of Moses and the high consideration which he bore for Jethro, did not make him oblivious of the duties which he owed, as it were, more to his people than to his family.

The next day, the servant of God resumed his ordinary occupations, and at early morning he was again the arbiter of his people; his whole time was consecrated to them, and scarcely had he a moment's respite. Jethro felt anxious, on beholding the constant and laborious exertions of his son-in-law, and he said to him: "Why do you deal thus with this people? You are the only judge in their midst, and for this reason you are beset from dawn of day till sunset." "And how otherwise should I deal with them?" replied Moses; "this people look upon me as their oracle;

to appease their various contests, they have recourse to me, so as I should make known to them the will and the laws of God." "This is just," rejoined Jethro, "but suffer me to speak to you with all sincerity of heart: this labor is above your strength, cease it therefore in due time or you will succumb. Harken to the counsel I now give you, for it meets the approbation of the Most High. Reserve yourself for all things concerning Religion, its worship, its ceremonies, and the instruction of the people, but for the rest you are not short of honest and disinterested men, who fear God and cherish truth and justice; leave to them the details of minor affairs, and once more, reserve yourself for those of first importance. Abiding by this advice, you will act according to the designs of the Lord. You will thereby fulfil the duties of your ministry, you will be relieved of a heavy task, and your people will go their way satisfied."

Moses followed the advice of his father-in-law, and having selected amongst his people the most respected of them for their piety, their honesty and their learning, he instituted them as judges over a certain number of persons, over a thousand, a hundred, fifty, and even over ten. They were to settle minor matters, reserving those of importance for Moses. After this salutary ad-

vice, wherefore it would seem that God had conveyed Jethro to Mount Horeb, the latter took leave of Moses and returned to Midian delighted with the greeting whereof he was the object. (Exod. xviii.)

Let us admire the modesty of Moses. He condescends to hearken to the advice of a fellow-being, in spite of the great wisdom whereby he was invested by God. Then, he shares with others an authority which he might have reserved for himself. Such is the example of the Saints: they know not ambition, nor jealousy, nor pride.

MIGHTY DISPLAY FOR THE PROMULGATION OF THE LAW.

I.

SOLEMN PROPOSITIONS.

THE pillar gave the usual signal, and the Israelites departed from Raphidim, and on the first day of the third month since the going out of Egypt, they entered the desert of Sinai, and their journey thither was not long. They raised a pavilion in view of the famous mountain which gave its name to this wilderness, leaving open a large space of land between the camp which

they had chosen and the height which was to serve as the theatre to one of the most sublime, and most solemn spectacles that eye of man had ever witnessed.

As it was to be apprehended that the truths which God had given to the father of the human race, and which were transmitted, by tradition, from father to son, might be changed and even forgotten, God wished to renew them by giving written laws. Moses had retired to the summit of Mount Sinai, to offer prayers to God, when, in the midst of the silence and his deep meditation, the Lord made His voice heard, and He said: "Go, Moses, return to the Hebrews and tell them that their God has said: You have witnessed the severity with which I have treated the Egyptians, and how I have delivered you from out of their hands. I have chosen you for my people; I have carried you as the eagle carries her young ones upon her wings. If therefore you listen to my voice, if you do my will, you shall be the choice portion of my inheritance, for the world belongs to me. You shall be to me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation."

Moses came down from the mountain, and called together the children of God; he repeated to them faithfully the words of the Lord and he

terminated by asking of them a precise answer. They exclaimed unanimously : " We shall do as the Lord says, we shall submit without murmur to His commands." Moses returned, with joy, to apprise the Lord of the resolution of his people. " Now," replied the Lord, " you shall be my interpreter to them. I shall appear to you veiled in a dark cloud, in order that my people hear me when I shall speak to you, and that they believe the truths which you will announce to them from me. Return to the camp, purify the Hebrews to-day, and to-morrow let them wash their garments and be ready for the third day, on which the Lord will descend in all His glory on Mount Sinai, in the presence of the people of Israel. Encompass the mountain with barriers, and say to the people : do not ascend the mountain or pass those limits, for those who transgress this order shall die, animals as well as men. They shall approach the limits, but at the sound of a trumpet." Moses came back from the mountain and related all that the Lord had commanded. (Exod. xix.)

What respect for this mountain whence should come the voice of the Almighty, publishing His divine oracles, and giving His laws. What dispositions then were necessary to hear the voice of God ; and how do we now dispose

ourselves to hear the oracles of the new law and the Word of God?

II.

TEN DIVINE SENTENCES.

ALL these preparations were necessary for the grand solemnity of the publication of the law, and to dispose the people to receive them with sentiments of religious veneration. On the third day, the people of Israel were full of anxious expectation, when at sunrise the thunder resounded through the heavens, the lightning lit up the sky with vivid splendor, and a dense and sombre cloud shrouded the mountain from view. From the depth of this cloud came the sound of the trumpet calling forth the children of Israel, but they were seized with fear, and they fled to their tents for shelter. Moses, himself terrified, could scarcely render his voice audible. At length he assembled the children of Israel in the open space between the camp and the barriers placed at the foot of the mount. Then Moses ascended toward its summit, to receive the laws of our Divine Master. The atmosphere was pregnant with fire, and the smoke thickened into whirlwinds of flame, the trumpet sounded long and

piercing, and the whole aspect above was one of awful grandeur.

The Lord told Moses to return, and to caution the Israelites not to pass the limits for fear of being struck dead. Moses obeyed, and he and his brother Aaron were the only ones exempted from this law. Soon in the midst of this scene of terror and majesty, the voice of the Almighty was distinctly heard to say: "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage :

" 1. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me ; thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or of those things that are in the waters under the earth ; thou shalt not adore them or serve them. I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers, upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, and showing mercy unto thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

" 2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

" 3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days thou shalt labor and do all

thy work ; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God ; on it thou shalt do no work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger who is within thy gates ; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day ; therefore hath the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it.

“4. Honor thy father and mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

“5. Thou shalt not kill.

“6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“7. Thou shalt not steal.

“8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

“9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

“10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing belonging to him.”

Those are the commandments of God, or His laws which He has graven in the hearts of all men, and which He renewed then, because ignorance and passions had almost effaced them from their memories. (Exod. xx.)

Thus was published the eternal, divine, unchangeable law, containing all that which we owe to God and to our neighbor. Very different from the laws ending with the synagogue, for it is irrefragable, and Jesus Christ Himself has said that not a syllable, not a letter shall be retrenched therefrom.

III.

FEAR OF DEATH.

WHEN the Lord ceased to speak, the lightnings, the flames, and the smoke escaped from the mountain like from a burning furnace. The thunder continued to shake the mountain, and the voice of the trumpet resounded with the same awful solemnity. Meanwhile, the Hebrews struck with a strange fear retired to their tents and said to Moses: "We have been made witnesses of the glory and the majesty of the Lord, we have heard Him speak in the midst of flames, and now we have learned by experience that a man can hear the voice of God and not die;* but this miracle might not be repeated a second time.

"What is man, that he can hope to live after having seen and heard that which we have

* It was a general opinion amongst the Jews, that no one could see God without dying.

heard and seen? Do you, Moses, you the servant of the Lord, approach and hear the voice of the Sovereign Master; you will bring us back His commands, and we shall execute them, for fear that we might die." "Cease to fear," said Moses to them, "the Lord has shown Himself to you in all the splendor of His majesty to test your faith, to avert prevarication, and that you may respect His infinite power." They remained therefore at a respectful distance, whilst Moses disappeared in the midst of the dread obscurity that enveloped the mountain, and he represented to the Lord the fear of His people. "I have heard them," said the Lord, "and I am not angered; I approve of their submission and their respect: may they always remain in fear and keep my precepts forever, that I may bless them and their children. "Go now," continued the Lord, "and tell the people to enter their camp; do you return here, and I shall make known to you my will, which you will then give to my people."

"The Lord said unto me at Horeb: 'I shall raise from amongst their fathers, a Prophet* like to one of you; He shall speak my words, and He shall do my will. He who does not listen to Him shall be the object of my vengeance.'"

* This Prophet is Jesus Christ.

Admirable prediction of the ancient legislator who, penetrating through the darkness of fourteen centuries, saw the birth of the divine Prophet and the promulgation of a new law, of which his was but the shadow, the sketch, the figure. (Exod. xx. ; Deut. xviii.)

The Jews said to Moses : " Let not the Lord speak unto us for fear we might die." But we, who are the children of grace, we address ourselves directly to the eternal Truth, and we say to him : " Speak unto us, O Lord, that we may not die ; you alone have the words of eternal life."

IV.

DIVINE PRECEPTS.

AFTER these divine recommendations, Moses returned to the people and spoke to them of the goodness with which the Lord had heard his prayer. He instructed them anew upon the prohibition of idols of gold and silver ; then, sending them back to their tents, he ascended again upon the mountain. There the Lord gave His minister several other laws, which are mostly explanations of the ten great commandments already given by the Almighty. He subjoined several precepts upon morals, and a few ceremonies regarding Religion. We cannot refrain

mentioning here some fragments of these divine laws.

Thou shalt proscribe magicians and sorcerers, and whosoever shall sacrifice to strange gods shall perish. Thou shalt do no evil to strangers, remembering that thou hast been a stranger in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt do no evil to the widow nor to the orphan; if thou harmest them, their cries will reach mine ear, and I will hearken to them; my wrath will break out against thee; thou shalt perish by the sword; thy wives shall become widows, thy children orphans. Thou shalt not speak ill of magistrates or judges, and thou shalt not curse the head of thy people. Thou shalt not listen to lying words, nor bear false witness with the wicked. In judgment, thou shalt not agree with the greater number, when acting contrary to truth and justice. Do not allow thyself to be moved with compassion in a judgment against the poor, but likewise condemn him not unjustly because he is poor. Thou shalt not cause the death of the innocent and the just, for I abhor him who is guilty of injustice. Thou shalt not receive gifts; they blind even the wise man, and corrupt the judgment of the just. Thou shalt rise in respect to old age; thou shalt honor the aged with a fear of the Lord thy God. Let not

the wages of the laborer be left unpaid till the morrow, but pay it the same day before sunset ; he is poor, he must earn his bread, and if he make known to me his grievances, I shall charge thee with this sin. (Exod. xxii., xxiii.)

These laws teach us to be gentle, humane, and charitable towards our brothers, to do good to every one, to harm no one. Thus should we walk in the traces of our heavenly Father, who is love, charity, and mercy itself.

V.

FIRST CONFIRMATION OF THE ALLIANCE.

HAVING received the instructions of the Lord, Moses came down from the mountain, and, assembling the princes of the tribes and the elders, he made known to them the will of God, His different laws, and His rules of conduct for the nation ; and he charged them to instruct Israel thereof. The latter immediately published them in the camp, and all responded in a unanimous voice : " We shall submit to the Lord, we shall do all that he demands of us." Whilst the people retired to rest, Moses spent the greater part of the night writing all the laws and the rules of God. Early in the morning he left his tent, followed by a few of the most fervent

Israelites; and he went forth to the foot of the mountain; there he raised an altar, which was like a throne to God. Around the altar were twelve pillars, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. This work accomplished, Moses assembled the people for the confirmation of the alliance. They went forth in multitudes, and all being placed around the altar, he gave orders for the sacrifices. He selected twelve youths, each of whom offered to the Lord as a holocaust, a calf and other victims. Then Moses read the book of the law in the presence of all the people, who again answered: "We submit to the Lord, we shall do all that He asks of us." Then the servant of God, standing by the altar, had brought to him a bunch of hyssop, and some wool tinted in scarlet color; he dipped them into the blood of the victims, which was mixed with pure water, and he sprinkled, by aspersion, the book of the law, which was placed upon the altar; then the twelve tribes presented themselves, one after the other, and he sprinkled them, by aspersion, with the same blood, pronouncing those words: "This is the blood of the alliance that the Lord has contracted with you, on the conditions written in the book of the law." (Exod. xxiv.)

By this aspersion, the Lord, in the person of

Moses, confirmed the alliance which had been announced so often to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The people, covered with the blood of the victims, ratified their promises and submitted themselves to the chastisement of their transgressions. By virtue of this contract, the children of Israel became, as it were, more particularly the children of God; and God declared Himself to be their protector, their father, and their king. Never had they witnessed a more solemn ceremony.

What great advantages we have over the Jews! The blood of the victims whereby they were sprinkled, was the mark of the alliance between God and them; and we Christians have the blood of God himself poured into our souls! This divine blood strengthens them and nourishes them. It is the mark of an eternal alliance with God, a mark which leads us to Heaven, and allows us to participate in His very divinity!

VI.

TENTH FIGURE.

THIS ceremony of the aspersion of the blood of the victims, was but the figure, the shadow of that which, after more than fifteen centuries, should confirm the new alliance of the Saviour

with all men ; when the Messiah, Son of God and God Himself, wished to ratify it by the effusion of His own blood, and to become the victim, the priest, and the mediator of the contract. And indeed :

To confirm the old alliance, Moses erected an altar crowned with twelve pillars, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus Christ, to confirm the new alliance, erected the altar of the last Supper, with the twelve apostles representing all the Church.

Moses immolated victims, and taking the blood thereof, he sprinkled the people, saying : "This is the blood of the alliance which the Lord has contracted with you." Our Lord immolated Himself as victim ; He shed His blood and He sprinkled His apostles with it, and giving them His blood to drink, He said these words : "This is the blood of the new alliance which the Lord has contracted with you."

When the Israelites were sprinkled with the blood of the victims, they became the people of God, who promised that, if they were faithful, He would protect them in the desert and guide them to the promised land. When the Christians were sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ, they became the true people of God, who promised that, if they remained faithful, He

would protect them in the desert of this life, and guide them to the true promised land—Heaven.

In the old law there were bloody sacrifices, whose victims were immolated; others were unbloody, whose victims were not immolated. In the new law, we have the bloody sacrifice of the cross, upon which Jesus Christ was immolated, and those on our altars, where Jesus Christ is immolated in a mystical manner; for, once raised from the dead, he can never die. In the old law, the substance of an unbloody sacrifice was bread and wine. In the new law, it is bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In the old law, to replace sacrifices, they immolated, morning and night, a lamb without spot. In the new law, to perpetuate the august sacrifice of the cross, which replaces all the sacrifices of the old law, because, during over eighteen centuries, and throughout the world, at every hour, at every instant of the day and night, there are sacrifices upon our altars of the Lamb of God. Let us unite ourselves with the ministers of the Most High, who offer throughout the universe, a victim without spot, for the salvation of all men.

STRANGE PREVARICATION.

I.

A FAST OF FORTY DAYS.

AFTER the confirmation of the alliance, Moses, obeying the orders of the Lord, conducted Aaron and his two oldest sons and seventy-two elders of the nation to render homage to the Sovereign Being of the Universe. They returned to the camp transported with the magnificent spectacle of the glory of God, of which they had been witness. The next day Moses had order to ascend the holy mountain to receive from the Almighty two tables of stone, upon which were written the laws, which were the foundation of the alliance with Israel. Josue, his principal confidant and general of the people of God, accompanied him thither. As Moses expected to be sometime absent, he assembled the elders, and said to them: "I am going on Mount Sinai, whither the Lord calls me. Remain in the same encampments till my return; if any contests arise amongst you, or any extraordinary occurrence happen, you have Aaron and Hur; let the people address themselves to them, and let

them abide by their decisions." After this warning, Moses departed, accompanied by Josue. On reaching close to the summit of the mount, they halted to receive new orders. Immediately the mountain was covered with a thick cloud, which concealed it entirely from the view of the people, this was, however, a sensible mark of the glory of the Lord and His presence on Mount Sinai. It manifested itself likewise to the children of Israel as a beautiful bright and luminous flame glowing above the dark cloud that surrounded the mountain. During six days, Moses and Josue were enveloped in this darkness. The seventh day the Lord called His servant, who at once separated from Josue, and mounted through the cloud to the summit of the holy mountain. There he remained alone in the presence of his God during forty days and forty nights, without feeling the slightest want of food. Meanwhile, the Lord communicated to him the manner in which He wished to be worshipped; He determined all that related to the sacrifices; He likewise ordered him to prepare all the necessary materials for the erection of those grand works of which He would soon give him the model and the designs—these were the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, &c. The Lord

gave also orders relating to a great many other ceremonies, whose object was divine worship. "Behold," said the Lord, "and imitate the model shown to you on the mountain." At length, on the fortieth day, the Lord gave Moses two tables of stone, whereon were engraven the ten precepts promulgated with so much splendor in the presence of the people on Mount Sinai.

Then the servant of God departed from the mountain, and went forth amongst the Hebrews to publish the new revelations whereby he was honored. (Exod. xxv.)

Moses was in the presence of God during forty days and forty nights without taking any food. Fast and abstinence approach us to the celestial spirits, and above all, to the Supreme Being. Alas! why should this holy and salutary law be generally overlooked, shunned, and almost abolished?

Like Moses, we can be in the presence of God, not only forty days, but forty years, and all our lifetime, by offering Him our actions at the commencement of the day, by conversing with Him, as a friend to a friend, even in the midst of numerous occupations, by praising Him at all times—in adversity as in prosperity.

Thus, like another Moses, we shall be ever

on the mountain, surrounded by glory in the presence of God.

II.

HORRIBLE PREVARICATION.

WHILST Moses was on the mountain fasting and praying, and receiving from God the important instructions for the Hebrews, they, the ingrates! were disposing themselves by their own crimes for dreadful chastisements. They supposed that the absence of Moses would not be prolonged; a month elapsed, and they had no tidings of him. They impiously renewed their murmurs, and, surrounding Aaron in multitudes, they seditiously cried: "Up! make us a god which will go before us! As for this Moses, we know not what has become of him." They became so mutinous, that Aaron was in danger of being stoned to death, had he made the merest resistance. He endeavored to dissuade them from this sacrilegious resolution, yet he asked them for their jewels! "Well, then," said Aaron to them, "since you must have gods, strip your wives and your daughters of their ear-rings, and bring them hither." He was promptly obeyed, and the ground before him was soon scattered with their precious jewels. Aaron, overcome by fear, took them

and delivered them to be cast into a furnace, and made into a golden calf, which was placed upon a pedestal. At the sight of this image, the Hebrews, seized with the demon of idolatry, exclaimed unanimously: "This, and like this, is thy God, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Aaron thought probably that this excess of idolatry would be of short duration; and in this hope he erected an altar before this abominable divinity, and ordered a herald to announce that the next day they would celebrate a grand feast to this god.

Alas! he was deceived; he saw that this golden image was for them a veritable idol. At early morning they burned incense, and sacrificed before it; then they ate and drank; and having cast aside their arms and their tunics, they rose from table to spend the remainder of the day in dancing and in profane amusements. Aaron was grieved to witness this disorder, this sacrilegious excess which, indeed, he might have prevented at the peril of his life. But the God of Israel is filled with just wrath. (Exod. xxxii.)

After the solemn protestations of fidelity of this people, who would not be seized with horror at the sight of their sacrilegious violations

of the first commandment? To adore a metal calf! What ingratitude! what folly!

But there are others in the present age who are guilty of folly and ingratitude: the proud, the voluptuous, the avaricious, the ambitious, do they not abandon God to adore vain idols? Their lips may confess the existence of the true God, whilst their souls bow before the vile divinities of flesh and metal.

III.

EXTERMINATION OF IDOLATERS.

HOWEVER, Moses was on the mountain, and the Lord had given him the knowledge of His will. He was on the point of returning towards his beloved people, for he knew not what had taken place! But God had witnessed their criminal enjoyments, and He was resolved to exterminate the prevaricators. "Go," said He to His servant, "descend the mountain. Your cherished people, which you have brought forth out of Egypt, hath sinned against me; the ingrates! they have made a golden calf; they have adored it; they have offered it sacrifices, and they have said: 'This is thy God, O Israel, which has carried thee out of the land of Egypt.' I see that they are stiff-necked, indocile, and incorrigible; but I shall

annihilate them in my wrath. I shall choose another people, more powerful, more numerous, and of which I shall give you the guidance.” “No, O Lord,” replied Moses, “I implore you not to manifest your anger against this people; they are your children; you have withdrawn them from bondage; you have severed their chains by the strength of your Almighty hand. Would you have the Egyptians insult your name, and say: ‘It is for evil that their God has taken them out of Egypt; it is to let them perish in the deserts; it is to banish them totally from off the face of the earth.’ O, my God, allow yourself to be moved. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; you have said to them: ‘I shall multiply your race as the stars of the firmament; I shall give to your posterity the land of Canaan.’ You will keep your promise, O Lord, and you will not abandon your holy name to the blasphemies of the impious.” At the voice of Moses, God was disarmed, and He did not execute the total ruin of the Hebrews. Such is the all-powerful effect of the prayer of the just!

The servant of God came down from the mountain, and his heart was overflowing with the bitterest sorrow! He held in his hands the tables of stone, whereon were engraven the

precepts of the law. Josue joined him, and he knew not to what he should attribute the grief of his master. At the foot of the mountain he heard a confused noise. "Is not this," said he to Moses, "the clamor of two armies fighting?" "Not so, Josue," responded Moses, "the confusion you hear is not soldiers on the battlefield, but the disorder of a senseless people. Moses said no more; and as he approached the camp, he perceived the calf placed upon a pillar, and the children of Israel singing and dancing profanely around it. In his indignation, Moses broke the tables of stone upon which God had engraven the law; then, advancing in the midst of the astonished people, he seized hold of the idol, and cast it afar. Aaron had order to burn it; it was then ground into a powder, which, being mixed with water, Moses made the idolaters drink of the nauseous draught. Thus did they swallow their own iniquity. What energy on the part of the servant of God, when compelled to punish such horrid crimes! Turning then to Aaron, he rebuked him sternly: "What," said he, "has this people done to you that you should suffer them to be guilty of the greatest of crimes?" "Let not my Lord be offended," replied Aaron; "you know the inclinations of this people

to idolatry, for they all cried: ‘Make us a god which shall go before us: as for this Moses, who has taken us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him.’ I could not alone resist their fury, and I demanded their gold and jewels, which were instantly thrown down before me, and the image of a calf was produced therefrom.”

The people, witnessing the severity which Moses used towards his own brother, stood trembling in await for the sentence which should be pronounced against them. And did not the majesty of God demand reparation? Moses placed himself at the entrance of the camp, and raising his voice, exclaimed: “Whosoever among ye have remained faithful to God, join me.” Then those of the tribe of Levi, who had not participated in the crime of idolatry, gathered around their leader, who was so justly angered, and he said to them: “Be armed each one of you with your sword, and slay all those who have bowed their knee before the calf.” Moses was obeyed, the prevaricators were overwhelmed with consternation and remorse, and they submitted without resistance to this terrible vengeance. In one hour three and twenty thousand men were slain by the sword, in expiation of their sin against God. Then Moses said to the

children of Levi: "Enough; this day you have consecrated yourselves to God, by being the instruments of His vengeance; you have drawn down upon you His blessing." Having thus spoken, he sent them forth and retired to his tent. (Exod. xxxii.)

This chastisement seems terrible, but it was provoked by an enormous crime, the crime of disloyalty, divine and human, that of idolatry. Why did not the Lord, who is the Sovereign Master of life, exterminate the whole nation? He could have done it, inasmuch as He forbid idolatry upon pain of death, and if three and twenty thousand only of the transgressors were punished, it is owing to His great goodness and mercy.

IV.

THE BOOK OF LIFE.

THE next day, Moses assembled the people, and represented to them the enormity of their crime. "You are prevaricators," said he to them, "you have committed against the Lord the greatest of crimes; I shall intercede for you; await here the result thereof." Having reached the spot where he was wont to pray, he prostrated himself before God, he humbled himself in His

presence, as though he was himself culpable. "O Lord," exclaimed he, "hearken to the prayers of your servant. I know your people to be ungrateful, that they have adored idols of vile metal, but, O pardon them, or if you cannot show mercy, efface me from off your book, the book of life." "No," replied the Lord, "it shall not be you, but those who have sinned against me that I shall efface from the book of life. As for you, Moses, go conduct this people into the promised land; my angel shall precede you thither, and I shall punish this crime in the day of my wrath. Say to the Israelites, you are an ungrateful people, I shall no longer lead you myself, for fear that new transgressions should oblige me to exterminate you all. O guilty people! strip yourselves of your ornaments, and I shall see what is to be done." The Israelites were fear-stricken at these words, and divesting themselves of their rich robes, they put on black garments and sackcloth, and they wept in repentance to soften the Lord.

However, Moses, by his prayers and his supplications, prevailed on the Lord to continue to be the leader of his people. Encouraged by these graces, he solicited the favor of beholding the glory of the Lord; this was granted him. The day following, when on the summit of the moun-

tain, he retired to the hollow of a rock. All of a sudden, the Lord covered him with a cloud, so as not to overpower him by the greatness of His majesty, and he passed with His glory; the cloud vanished, and Moses beheld the Lord when it passed away. The elect alone can see the Lord face to face, that is to say, His essence. (Exod. xxxiii.)

How terrible for the transgressor to incur the Lord's anger; but how consoling for the just to converse with this God of goodness, of mercy, to speak with him as a friend to a friend, and to live in the hope of seeing Him face to face in His glory!

V.

TIME OF PRAYER.

At the commencement of the journey, Moses had erected a tent in the midst of the camp; it served as a tabernacle, till such time as the Lord would give orders to raise another. In this tabernacle, Moses received the communications of the Lord. It was as a propitiatory shrine, which assured Israel of God's protection. Those who had grave questions to settle, went there to consult the holy legislator, and all the people looked upon it as a sign of the protection of

God over them. Moses had it transported from out of the camp, because it had been profaned by idolatry. Deplorable abandonment of a God justly angered, who no longer would dwell on sacrilegious ground in the midst of a criminal people!

The holy legislator made of it, as it were, his common abode, so constant were his communications with God. When he passed in the midst of the people to repair to this cherished tent, they rose in respect, they eagerly gazed at him till he disappeared within its enclosure: then a pillar of cloud was seen to descend and to remain at its entrance, whilst he held communication with God. Meantime, the Israelites prayed in their pavilions; they adored the majesty of the Sovereign Master, who spoke to His servant as a friend would speak to a friend, making known to him the mysteries of His wisdom. On leaving the tent, Moses was wont to assemble the people and publish the orders of the Almighty, whilst Josue remained in the tabernacle prostrated in the presence of the Lord. (Exod. xxxiii.)

From the beginning, God had manifested Himself to the Hebrews, as their king, under the form of a pillar of cloud; He was in their camp, marching before them, or stopping when

they should stop ; but Israel had sinned, and He would no longer dwell amongst them. Alas ! how many are there who banish God from their hearts and who force Him to seek abode elsewhere !

VI.

THE NAME OF JEHOVAH.

MOSES had broken the tables of the law, thinking they were useless to a people who abandoned themselves to idolatry, but the holy leader obtained their pardon. "Prepare yourself to return to the mountain," said the Lord to Moses ; "cut and polish two tables of stone, alike to those which you broke on seeing the prevaricators of Israel. Upon them I shall engrave the same laws as the first, and I shall make known to you my will. Nobody shall accompany you ; I forbid any man or beast to appear upon the mountain. To-morrow, at dawn of day, be in readiness, ascend the mountain of Sinai, and I then shall communicate with you."

Nothing could be more pleasing to Moses than those commandments, and he executed them with heartfelt joy. He sallied forth then early in the morning, with the tables of stone which he had prepared for the laws of God.

The Most High descended on the mountain, veiled in a dark cloud, and whilst Moses stood in prayer, he passed with his glory and pronounced His greatness: "The Lord, the Lord God Almighty, compassionate and merciful, slow to be angered, full of goodness and truth itself, and showing mercy to thousands of generations, who remits sin, iniquity, and crime, and before whom no one is innocent in himself." Seized with fear, Moses fell prostrate on the ground, and exclaimed: "Lord, my God, if I have found grace in your eyes, remain in our midst and guide us, for this people is obstinate and hard to lead. Forget my iniquities, and think, O think that you have chosen us as your inheritance." The Lord manifested Himself to Moses according to this desire: "I shall make an alliance with this people," said the Lord, "and I shall operate in their behalf wonders, such as no nation has ever before witnessed. Your people, in favor of whom I shall perform these miracles, shall be astonished at their increase and at their strength; but at least, let me find them grateful and obedient. On their arrival there, I shall destroy the idolatrous nations now occupying those fertile regions which I have promised to your fathers; but let the Israelites beware of associating themselves with those people; let

them throw down their altars, break their idols, and burn down their sacrilegious woods; let not the slightest vestige remain thereof, for they would soon adore the gods of those nations. I am the only God, strong and jealous."

The Lord gave likewise to Moses, a great number of precepts for the government of the people, and He commanded him to write them down. The Lord engraved with His own hand the ten fundamental precepts of the law. (Exod. xxxiv.)

The Lord calls himself God, jealous—because He is the spouse of our souls and that He loves them infinitely. What has He not done for our souls at all times? And is it not a dreadful ingratitude of the spouse of the divinity, when she abandons the Lord, who is so worthy, so noble, so amiable, when she prostitutes herself to vile idols! We comprehend why God is jealous, and why He abhors a rival.

VII.

RADIANT APPEARANCE OF THE
HOLY LEGISLATOR.

WHEN Moses had spent forty days and forty nights as before, on the mountain, without eating and without drinking, and in close communication with God, he received order to return to the people. He descended, therefore, the heights, and held in his hands the tables of the law, in order to assure the people, by this signal, of the renewal of the alliance with God. But there was another sign, of which the holy legislator was not aware, and which struck the Israelites with fear to approach his person. In consequence of the intimate communications which he held with the Divine Majesty, there shone from his forehead two rays resplendent with light, and Aaron and the elders as they approached his presence, were seized with a profound fear. Moses, on the other hand, ignoring the cause of their fear, called Aaron and the princes of the tribes, and reassured them by protesting that he brought but words of peace. Meantime they drew near him, and Moses was in the midst of the children of Israel. He then related to them the re-

newal of the alliance which they had so ungratefully violated; he spoke to them of the laws imposed upon them, and the engagements which he had taken in their name. It took him several days to relate all the orders and the laws of the Lord, and others concerning civil government. Hence he did not appear in their presence without covering his face with a veil, which he cast aside whenever he prayed in the tabernacle. Mysterious veil, which has passed from Moses into the hearts and minds of some of his children! it conceals from them the wonders announced by Moses, and they believe not in the events of salvation, accomplished under their eyes and predicted by their prophets. (Exod. xxxiv.) We are not blindfolded, like the unbelieving Jews; and "we see," says St. Paul, "the glory of the Lord as in a mirror." (2 Cor. iii.) Let us manifest our belief by the observation of his precepts—not by force or terror, but by love; we are his chosen people, we are the true children of Abraham.

LAWS RELATING TO PUBLIC WORSHIP.

I.

SUPERFLUOUS OFFERINGS.

THE holy legislator promptly executed the commands of the Lord. He assembled the people and informed them of the orders which he had received relating to the construction of the tabernacle, the ark, the mercy-seat, the altar of perfumes, the altar of holocausts, the duties of the priests and Levites, etc.; in a word, all service relating to the worship of the Lord, and to the ceremonies of religion. He likewise informed them of the taking of the census of the people, and of exacting from all Israelites aged twenty-one and over that age, half a shekel, (about thirty cents.) There were then 603,550 persons liable to this contribution. He advised them besides to offer precious goods, jewels and stuffs, for the aid and execution of many great works. Scarcely had he spoken, when they all rushed to their tents to furnish offerings to the Lord. A generous rivalry sprung up among them, and they disputed with each other the honor of manifesting their generosity.

Gold necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets, rings, precious stuffs, and costly garments were strewn at the feet of Moses. Golden vases, silver urns, brass, precious woods, violet, purple, and scarlet dyed, leathers of the finest quality and of the most dazzling hues, were presented to the Lord. Those women who were the most skilful at spinning fine wools and dressed flax, eagerly offered the produce of their ingenuity; the principal chiefs of families gave precious stones, oils, and aromatics for divine worship. Those who were appointed to receive the offerings, were so beset by the multitudes of donors, that they thought it time to put a stop to their liberality. Therefore, Moses published by a herald, that henceforth nothing more should be brought for the works of the sanctuary, that they had now more than enough of all sorts of materials. (Exod. xxxv., xxxvi.)

How beautiful to see the Hebrew people strip themselves of all they have most precious to contribute to the glory of divine worship. Our fathers in faith have manifested no less generosity: they have erected those superb temples which hand down to posterity the testimony of their zeal and of their love. If we do not imitate them in those grand undertakings, let us at least offer Him our hearts,

with generosity and without reserve. To God, this will be a temple of infinite price.

II.

THE TABERNACLE.

God Himself had given Moses the plan of those works, and had chosen the workmen for them. "Listen," said Moses to the Israelites, "to the orders of God, for He has said: 'I have called Beseleel; I have communicated to him my Spirit; I have filled him with wisdom, skill, and ingenuity to invent, and to execute all kinds of works in gold, silver, and brass, for the cutting and sculpturing of stones, for carving and joining. I have associated with him Ooliab, to whom I have given the same talents.'"

Under the guidance of these two distinguished men, the workmen wrought wonders. The first structure was the Tabernacle. It was made of setim-wood boards, lamellated with plates of gold; forty-eight of these boards were placed, each one, upon two bases of silver, fastened one into the other by five bars of setim-wood, covered with gold, and passed through golden rings, which encompassed three sides of the building, namely: twenty

boards on the east side, twenty on the south, and eight on the west. Each of these boards was of ten cubits in length, and one and a half in breadth. The whole space was divided into two parts by a beautiful veil, embroidered in purple, hyacinth, and scarlet colors, and studded with cherubs. This veil hung, upon two gold rings, to four pillars of setim-wood, overlaid with gold, and standing upon silver bases. Under a sumptuous drapery, or in that part of the Tabernacle called the *Holy of Holies*, was placed the Ark of the Covenant. Outside of this drapery was that place called *Holy*, wherein were deposited the table of the bread of proposition, the altar of perfumes, and the golden candlestick. The east entrance of the whole edifice was veiled by a drapery similar to the first, and suspended by rings over five pillars, like those of the exterior; but instead of their bases being of silver, they were of bronze.

The tent which covered the whole edifice was composed of ten curtains of fine linen, hyacinth, purple, and crimson tinted, and richly and elaborately wrought. Each one of these curtains was twenty-eight cubits long, and four wide, joined together by fifty hyacinth-colored cords, and held up by golden rings. Another rich mohair covering was placed over

the former, so as to preserve it; and this second covering had two others—the one of a red, the other of a blue-colored sheepskin.

The Tabernacle was situated in the centre of a court, or enclosure of one hundred cubits long, and fifty wide, enclosed, in its length from north to south, by twenty columns, the shafts of which were covered, from distance to distance, by silver rings, their capitals being of silver, whilst their bases were of brass. These columns supported fine linen curtains, which covered a space of a hundred cubits. At the east and at the west, where the width was but fifty cubits, there were ten pillars shrouded with draperies; but they had reserved an entrance of twenty cubits, enclosed by four pillars, more ornate than the others, and holding a veil more beautifully worked than those of the before-mentioned, and in this entrance was placed the altar of the holocausts, the vases for the purifications, and all other things used in the sacrifices. Such was the construction of the Tabernacle, which was a movable temple for the holy ceremonies, until the erection of the Temple of Jerusalem, built by Solomon.

All the tents of Israel were placed at a certain distance from this entrance and from the

Tabernacle. Thus did God dwell among the Israelites. (Exod. xxxvi.)

The drapery on which were embroidered the cherubs, and which separated the Holy of Holies from the holy place, recalled to the minds of the Israelites the cherub which was placed at the entrance of the terrestrial Paradise, and which guarded it. But when our Lord expired on the cross, the veil was rent, in order to make us understand that by His death He annihilated the warrant of our condemnation, and opened for us, by shedding His blood, the gates of the *Eternal Tabernacle*.

III.

THE ARK.

WHEN Beseleel had completed the Tabernacle, according to the rules set down by the Lord, he commenced the construction of the Ark. It was two cubits and a half long, and one and a half high. Destined to contain the sacred monument of the covenant, it was to be composed of incorruptible wood, of the precious wood of Setim, lined inside and outside with the finest and purest of gold, and ornamented all around with a garland of pure gold. It was closed with a golden cover, with a border form-

ing a golden wreath. This cover was called *Oracle*, or *Mercy-Seat*; because thence God gave His oracles to the Hebrews, when showing Himself favorable to them, and thence he received their prayers, or made peace with them. Upon this table, or *Mercy-Seat*, were two cherubim of massive and wrought gold; they spread their wings over the Ark, as if to serve as a throne to the majesty and to the holiness of God. Hence Scripture represents, frequently, God resting on the wings of cherubim.

As this Ark was to be movable, four large gold rings were fastened to the four corners, and they were to encircle setim-wood levers covered with gold. This was destined to hold the Tables of the Law; by reason of which, it was called Ark of the Covenant. A measure of manna was to be enclosed therein. This manna was placed in a golden vase, in memory of the miracle of this food; later, the rod of Aaron was also deposited therein. The Ark was to be left in the first part of the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies; there, the high-priest alone, once a year, after having immolated a heifer in expiation of his own sins, penetrated, trembling with humility, and offered the perfumes and the blood of the victim. (Exod. xxxvii.)

The Ark was held in great honor amongst the

Hebrews. It was, however, nothing in comparison to our churches : it was only the shrine of souvenirs, of signs or of figures ; but our tabernacles contain the reality, the divine manna, the bread of angels, Jesus Christ Himself—the true food of our souls. Let us resemble this ancient ark of incorruptible wood, covered on the inside and on the outside with gold ; that is to say, exempt from sin and adorned with virtues, and spreading around the holiness of Jesus Christ. Then God, who rests upon the cherubs, dwells in our souls, and the angels protect us with their wings. O you who are truly Christians, you indeed are living tabernacles !

IV.

THE BREAD OF PROPOSITION.

MOSES commanded also the erection of the altar of the *bread of proposition*. It was made of setim-wood covered over with pure gold, and enriched with a double edge of gold elaborately carved ; it required four gold rings and twelve levers of setim-wood to move it ; this table was to be placed before the Ark, in the Holy of Holies, but not in the same part of the tabernacle. It was to hold the *bread of proposition*, which was made of the finest flour mixed with olive

oil. There were twelve of them, placed six by six, and one upon the other, on either side of the table; they were renewed every Sabbath day in the presence of the Lord. The priests only had the prerogative to consume them, and they were to eat them in the Holy place as a sacred thing. God commanded that small basins of gold should be made to contain them, and others to serve as lids. He desired also that a vase filled with fine incense should be placed upon each of the piles, in order that the smoke thereof should ascend towards heaven, and that this bread would be thus consecrated to God. (Exod. xxxvii.)

We have the true bread of proposition, the Holy Eucharist, which is continually offered to God. This heavenly bread is not like the bread of proposition consecrated to priests only, it is for all the faithful, so that being united in heart and soul and animated by the same faith, the same hope, all form the same body, and as the same bread placed upon the altar of charity, in the presence of God, we consecrate ourselves to His glory.

V.

THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.

THAT which was most brilliant in the tabernacle was the golden candlestick: it had seven branches, six of which sprung from the stem which, in itself, formed the seventh. This candlestick was magnificent, and admirably wrought. The branches were figured with cups and lilies, which were interlaced one with another with indescribable art. Above these seven branches, were seven lamps made of massive and wrought gold, and in which burned the purest olive-oil. All was dazzling with gold, even the snuffers and the extinguishers and other instruments serving to keep the wicks in repair. The high-priest himself had the care and the lighting of those lamps, in order that they should burn night and day in the tabernacle, the children of Israel being charged to supply the necessary quantity of oil. (Exod. xxxvii)

In imitation of the Jews, a lamp burns perpetually in our churches, in the presence of Jesus Christ, so as to recall to our minds that He has loved us forever.

VI.

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE AND THE
ALTAR OF HOLOCAUSTS.

By order of God, Moses commanded the erection of the altar of incense, it was a golden altar destined to hold the exquisite incense which should be offered to the Lord twice a day. This altar was hollow, and it was covered with a golden grating, upon which were placed the perfumes. Besides its four golden rings and its bars of setim-wood, there were placed on the four corners, four little pyramids of gold, which the high-priest should sprinkle, once a year, with the blood of the victim. This altar was placed in that part of the tabernacle called the Holy, between the table of the bread of proposition and the golden candlestick.

Those perfumes figure the ardor and charity of fervent souls, whose prayers ascend to Heaven to the throne of the Most High. O Christians! how profoundly does God desire to see your hearts inflamed with the fire of holy love!

And finally, Moses ordered the erection of the altar of holocausts, where a perpetual fire should burn and where victims should be consumed. It was square, of setim-wood, and

lamellated with thick bronze. In the centre was placed a bronze grating, under which rose a fire. This altar was movable, because it should be, like the rest, easy for the people to transport in their different encampments. It had its metal rings, and its levers of setim, covered with bronze plates, and was placed in the entrance before the tabernacle.

This altar of victims represents the outward actions of penance, whereby the contrite sinner immolates himself, as it were, to God, like the holocausts of the old law.

Between this altar and the tabernacle, there was a bronze basin, filled with water wherein the priests should wash their hands and feet before officiating at the altar. (Exod. xxxvii. xxxviii.)

This basin is the figure of penance, where the sinner must cleanse himself of his sins before being admitted to participate at the holy sacraments.

VII.

SACERDOTAL ROBES.

By order of the Lord, Moses chose Aaron as the high-priest or the minister of Religion. Nadab Abiu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, his four sons, were also consecrated priests of the living God, so as

to exercise, under the directions of their father, the sacerdotal functions. Amongst them, the sovereign pontiff should henceforth be selected, and none but the descendants of Aaron could be chosen for priests.

The robes of the sovereign pontiff were of great magnificence, and full of mystic character. Besides the under vestments which every priest in the exercise of holy functions should have upon pain of death ; he should also wear a robe of fine linen resembling the alb of the present time. It was fastened by a girdle of many colors that encircled the waist twice, and hung down to his feet, but when officiating, the high-priest threw it over his shoulder. The pontiff's coat, and that of the priest were the same ; but the high-priest had another robe of hyacinth color, or light blue, and rather shorter than the outside tunic. Small figures of pomegranates were attached to its border, and small bells of gold were placed in between two of these pomegranates ; they were seventy-two in number, and their sound forewarned the people of the presence of the pontiff in the tabernacle. The same tunic was again covered with a rich ornament called an ephod. It was a golden tissue embroidered in purple, hyacinth, and scarlet colors, fastened on the shoulder by a golden

clasp, in which were set two onyx stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six upon one stone, and six upon the other. The ephod was covered with a double tissue of gold, embroidered like the ephod; it was the measure of a span, eight inches long, by eight wide, and on which were set in gold three by three, and in four lines, twelve precious stones, each one engraved with one of the names of the twelve sons of Jacob; in the centre of these stones were written upon a small gold plate the words—*Doctrine and Truth*. It was called the breast-plate of judgment; it was attached to the ephod by chains and clasps of gold, and by a violet ribbon which was passed through the rings of the ephod.

This ornament was indispensable to the high-priest, who could not enter into the tabernacle to consult the Lord, offer the prayers or the sacrifices of the nation, intercede for his brethren, expound the holy law, or perform the slightest holy functions, without wearing the ephod and the breast-plate.

For head-dress, the high-priest wore, like the other priests, a tiara of byssus and fine linen; the only difference existing was that that of the pontiff was ornamented with a plate of pure

gold engraved with the words: *Holy to the Lord*. This plate was attached to the tiara by a violet ribbon, and it fell over the forehead of the high-priest. (Exod. xxxvii., xxxix.)

Those sacerdotal robes were replete with meaning: the pure bright gold, the dazzling colors, signify the purity and the lustre of virtues which should adorn the life of ministers of God; the diminutive bells, the gentle soothing words which should flow from their lips, when announcing the word of God; this breast-plate with the words Doctrine and Truth, the spiritual food of the people of Israel.

VIII.

SOLEMN CONSECRATION.

THE orders of the Lord were promptly executed, and when the Israelites were informed of the day of the consecration, they assembled in crowds for the solemnity. On the first day of the first month of the second year, Moses took the balm that he had prepared by order of the Lord, and with it he consecrated the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the table of the bread of proposition, the golden candlestick, and the altar of perfumes. When this solemn ceremony was over, the Lord took, as it were, possession

of the shrine which had been consecrated to Him. The cloud which had guided the Hebrews now abandoned the tent or former tabernacle, and approaching the new, it enveloped it with the glory of God. The obscurity which for a few moments it had spread around the camp, seized the Israelites with a religious fear, and Moses himself could not penetrate into the presence of God; however, by degrees, this darkness vanished, and it assumed once more the form of a pillar. Encouraged by those remarkable signs, Moses consecrated the ministers. The largest veil of the tabernacle was drawn aside, affording a view of the court and the interesting spectacle, which was in preparation, to the people; but the princes of the tribes, the elders, and the heads of the principal families were allowed to enter the enclosure, in order that they might represent the different corps of the nation. Order being established, Moses had the sacerdotal robes brought, the oil or balm, the unleavened bread, and even the victims were before him. Then Aaron and his four sons presented themselves, and being placed on either side of Moses, the latter spoke to the people as follows: "My brethren, here are these whom the Lord has chosen, Aaron shall be your pontiff; his four

sons shall be the ministers of the altars and the depositaries of your offerings." He then proceeded with the ceremony. He purified them in the golden basin, and put on their robes; he gave the pontiff the tunic and the sash, and the rich tunic of violet, whence hung the pomegranates, and the golden bells; he fastened upon this double tunic the ephod and the breast-plate, set with precious stones; he also gave him the tiara, whilst his four sons had plain tunics of fine linen, with girdles and mitres, the other ornaments being reserved to the high priest only. Clad with those august robes, the pontiff and the priests presented themselves to receive public consecration. Moses took the balm of the unctions, wherewith he made seven aspersions upon the altar of the holocausts, and upon all the utensils which served for the sacrifices. As for Aaron and his sons, Moses poured upon their heads the balm of sanctification, with which he likewise anointed their hands.

In conclusion, he immolated the sacrifices, and Aaron and his sons placed their hands upon the heads of the different victims which were slaughtered, immolated, and finally burned upon the altar. Moses dipped his finger in the blood of the victims, so as to anoint the

new priests with it. He consecrated their garments with the balm whereby he sprinkled them. This ceremony lasted seven days, during which time the priests were forbidden to leave the court; they were equally obliged to eat the flesh of the victims and the unleavened bread that was presented to the Lord during the ceremony of the consecration.

On the eighth day, the high-priest and his sons entered upon their functions, and they offered the victims with all the solemnity prescribed by the law. Moses and Aaron entered the sanctuary to offer the victims of the children of Israel, hence they appeared in the court, and blessed the multitude assembled. Meanwhile, a fire lighted by the breath of God, kindled up upon the altar, and consumed the holocausts. This miracle profoundly impressed the Israelites, and they prostrated themselves to adore the majesty of the Master whom they had the honor to serve. (Exod. xxxix.)

As in the ancient law, our Christian churches bless and consecrate all things relating to divine worship—by unctions, by aspersions, by prayers, and by the august sacrifice of Jesus Christ Himself. Let us honor all holy things, all that is consecrated to the God whom we adore.

IX.

SACRED MINISTRY.

THE whole tribe of Levi was consecrated to the service of the Lord, but in a different manner. Aaron and his sons, Nadab, Abiu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, were charged with the holy functions, the greatest of which was the offering of the sacrifices. This was accomplished in the following manner :—He who offered a sacrifice to God, brought the victim before the altar of the holocausts, and placed his hand upon its head. This victim was a domestic animal, and one that the Jews could eat. It should be spotless. When it was slaughtered, the priests received its blood in a basin, and sprinkled it upon the altar; then it was stripped and burned, wholly, or in part, according to the sacrifice. There were three kinds of sacrifices. First, the *holocaust*, which was offered to God to render homage to His infinite majesty; this is why the victim was entirely consumed by fire. The *peace offering* was offered, to give thanks to God, or to implore Him for some particular grace. The fat and the loins of the victim were burned, the breast and the right shoulder were for the priest, the remainder belonged to

him who furnished the animal. The *propitiatory sacrifices* were offered to God in expiation of sins committed. In this sacrifice, the priest dipped his finger into the blood of the victim, and sprinkled the altar therewith; its flesh belonged to the priest, and it should be eaten in the court. The priests were charged with all services relating to the worship of God; night and morning the lamps were filled with oil, and perfumes were burned on the altar of gold. During the journeys of the Israelites in the wilderness, and when the pillar would give the signal to continue their march, the tabernacle was taken asunder, and then erected anew when they halted. As the whole tribe of Levi was consecrated to the service of God, some of them had charge to guard the gates of the sanctuary, to play upon instruments, to sing hymns in honor of the God of Israel; to receive the victims and the offerings, to carry water for the large basin, and wood for the altar of the holocausts; they were under the command of the high priest, as likewise those enjoying the sacerdotal honors. (Levit. x.)

The frequent sacrifices of the Jews, figure the great sacrifice of the cross, which rendered an infinite homage to the sovereign majesty of God. Let us give Him thanks worthy of His

goodness! Let us pray for abundant graces—for ourselves and for all humanity!

Jesus Christ was immolated upon a cross for us; and for the love of us He perpetuates this ineffable sacrifice.

X.

SOLEMN FEASTS.

BESIDES the Sabbath, and the solemnity of the first day of each month, the Israelites had several other feasts which they celebrated during the course of the year. The principal were these: The Pasch, the Pentecost, and the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Pasch was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month, by the sacrifice of a lamb in each family. It lasted a week; during which time the unleavened bread was eaten. This feast was instituted in remembrance of the going out of Egypt. The Pentecost was celebrated fifty days after the Pasch, as a memorial of the day on which God had given the law on Mount Sinai. The Feast of the Tabernacles took place in the seventh month. The Israelites passed the seven days of this feast under tents, in remembrance of the days that their fathers sojourned in the wilderness, before they entered

the promised land. Then the feast of the Sabbath, or seventh day of each week, that was to be sanctified by religious exercises in remembrance of the mysterious repose of the Lord after the creation of the world.

TERRIBLE SANCTION OF THE LAW.

I.

STRANGE FIRE.

Soon God made known with what exactitude He desired the discharge of the duties of divine worship. The law commanded that a fire should burn continually upon the altar, and that the priests should keep it in by putting wood on, morning and night. This was the holy fire used for the incensing. However, near evening, when the lamps were lighted, and the incense was burned upon the altar of perfumes, the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abiu, hastened to acquit themselves of this duty; but having neglected to take the sacred fire of the Lord, at the altar of the holocausts, they filled their censers with a profane and strange fire, and placed them in the sanctuary. The

new priests were instantly enveloped with a whirlwind of fire, which consumed them internally, without changing their outward appearance, and they lay stretched in death at the foot of the Holy of Holies. After this terrible chastisement, Moses impressed upon the minds of the priests the sanctity of their ministry. "Here is," said he to his brother Aaron, "what the Lord has announced: 'Those who approach me shall pay homage to my sanctity, and they shall glorify me in the presence of all the people.'" At these words, Aaron had to check his paternal feelings, and Moses continued to speak to him and to his sons, Eleazar and Ithamar: "God does not condemn the feelings of your heart," said he, "but the loud lamentations you might manifest in the depth of your grief. Do not, therefore, uncover your head, nor tear your garments, nor leave the tabernacle, but remain unflinchingly in the exercise of your duties, upon pain of death. Let the Levites and the Israelites deplore this harrowing occurrence, which has been a necessary example for the people."

The bodies of the transgressors were carried out of the camp; they were buried, and abundant tears were shed over their graves.

Moses forbade the priests to drink any inebri-

ating beverages before entering the tabernacle, for fear of being struck with death. (Levit. x.)

God inflicted a dreadful punishment upon Nadab and Abiu for having used strange fire. This shows us the horror He has of those who approach the sacraments with a heart burning with other love than that kindled by the Holy Ghost.

II.

A BLASPHEMER.

AFTER God had given this striking example of severity, He again manifested His anger against the son of a poor Hebrew woman. This young man, who had an Egyptian father, was quarrelling with an Israelite. In the heat of the dispute, he forgot himself so far as to blaspheme and curse the holy name of God—the ineffable name of Jehovah, which he was not allowed to pronounce. All those who heard him were deeply afflicted, and, seizing hold of him, they brought him before Moses. This holy man consulted the Lord thereupon, and the Lord said: “Let him be taken out of the camp, and be stoned to death. All those who shall curse my holy name shall thus perish, under the eyes of the multitude—Israelite or

Egyptian, he must be punished." Moses informed the people of this supreme sentence, and the young man was stoned to death. (Levit. xxiv.)

Ah! if this punishment were inflicted upon all those who blaspheme the holy name of God, what numberless monuments would mark the just vengeance of our Divine Master! But, He who exists from eternity is patient; He waits, He invites; and if the sinner persist in his obstinacy, he will not escape the dreadful justice of God.

III.

CONTEMNER OF THE SABBATH.

SOME time afterwards, an Israelite was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day, and the people fearing that such a bold transgression of the law might fall upon themselves, they instantly carried him before Moses and the elders, and they demanded punishment for the prevaricator. But the benign nature of the patriarch refused to pronounce a sentence, without again consulting the Lord. "Let him be stoned to death," said the Lord, and the people shall witness the effects of my just anger." Accordingly, the offender was taken out of the

camp, and he perished under an overwhelming hail of stones, because he had sinned by pride, and had scorned the word of God by disobeying His orders. (Numb. xv.)

By this example, let us learn to respect the Sabbath day. Alas! how many infractions are there of this holy law! What servile works are performed in contempt of our holy religion! and that which is a thousand times more criminal, there are persons who spend the Lord's day in all sorts of profane amusements. Ah! if God be silent—if we do not hear Him pronounce the terrible sentence: "Let him die! let him be smitten with stones!" this sentence exists in reality, and shall be his punishment sooner or later. Yes, all contemners of the Sabbath and other holy days should be punished; they should be cast into eternal suffering! Ah! let us remain faithful to the Lord, and let us pray that we may not follow the example of those unfortunate transgressors of his law.

THE
CHILDREN OF THE PATRIRACHS
WANDERING IN THE WILDERNESS.

REMEMBRANCE OF THE FLESH POTS
OF EGYPT.

I.

THE ORGANIZATION OF A CAMP.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1644.

WHEN the signal of the departure was given, the Israelites marched in four lines, forming three corps of four tribes, that followed at short intervals. This numerous army was always in readiness to face the enemy, at whatever side they were attacked. During the march, the women, the children, the aged, the slaves, the chariots, the sheep, and the oxen, were placed in the centre. Each tribe had its flag; but the principal tribe of the four large corps had a distinct standard, and the three tribes that were adjoined to it followed its movements. The most powerful of all, that of

Judah, whose descendants were destined to give birth to the Messiah, held the most honored rank amongst them. That of Issachar and Zabulon followed; then came Reuben, the oldest patriarch, who followed in the footsteps of Judah. Simeon and Gad were there; then Ephraim, Manasses, and Benjamin. Last came the tribes of Dan and Aser, and that of Nephthali, which formed the fourth great corps, and which closed the march. Between each tribe there was a large space, by means of which the movement of this immense multitude was accomplished in the most perfect order.

To avoid confusion, Moses had trumpets made, and their use was reserved to the priests only. On the point of departure, the priests sounded their trumpets, and the tribe of Judah commenced the march. When the corps rose to place itself on the first pavilion, Moses approached the ark and pronounced those words: "Rise, O Lord, that our enemies may be dispersed and that those who deny your holy name vanish in your presence." Then the ark, accompanied by Moses, the pontiff, and the priests, and followed by the tribe of Judah, placed itself at the head of Israel. At the second signal of the trumpet, the tribe of Reuben advanced; at the third, that of Ephraim, then that of Dan and the Levites

charged with every thing relating to public worship, marched under the protection of the tribes. When the pillar of cloud stopped as a signal to encamp, Moses, who never abandoned the Ark, exclaimed: "Return, O Lord, unto your tabernacles, and dwell in the midst of the multitudes and of the soldiers of Israel." Then the sanctuary and the court were erected forthwith; the ark was placed in the Holy of Holies; the golden candlestick, the tables and the altar of perfumes, were placed in the sanctuary, and every thing was prepared for new sacrifices.

Such was the grand march of the army of the people of God, offering a truly remarkable figure of the church militant. The most striking feature was that of the army of the Israelites, representing the cross, and that of their marching against their enemies under four banners. From this we may infer, that by the sign of the cross, that is to say Jesus Christ, we shall march boldly against our enemies, and we shall triumph over them.

II.

RENEWED MURMURS.

THE people of Israel had been a year encamping in the wilderness, at the foot of Mount Sinai, when, at length, on the twentieth day of the

second month of the second year, the pillar placed itself above the pavilions of the tribe of Judah. At the sound of the trumpet, each tribe prepared to depart; the ark of the covenant, with the pillar, headed the multitude to lead the way, and all the people followed, forming the most beautiful, the most formidable spectacle that had ever been witnessed. It was an army of more than 600,000 combatants, without reckoning a people of 2,000,000 of women, children, old people, proselytes, and servants, all conducted by the Almighty, to conquer the beautiful land promised to their fathers, and to establish, on the ruins of the former inhabitants, their families, their religion, their empire. This grand design was about to be accomplished, they were on the point of entering this happy land, when their murmurs were the cause of their punishment.

After three days' march in the desert, the Israelites were advancing near the term for which they so much desired; they were shielded from the heat of the sun, by a thick and cooling cloud, and nourished by the manna which followed them; the march was not forced, it was interrupted by intervals of sleep and rest, and yet, ere the end of the third day, they loudly murmured. The army advanced, but they re-

mained behind as though they were exhausted with fatigue. The Lord was filled with anger, and He sent a fire from heaven that destroyed the murmurers. Terror spread throughout the army, and the Israelites, on beholding their brethren consumed by fire, rushed towards Moses in the greatest dismay. This holy man, prostrated himself before God, to whom he offered the prayers and the sorrow of the people, and immediately the fire disappeared in the bowels of the earth. Alas! this was but the beginning of their murmurs. (Numb. xi.)

After so many proofs of God's goodness, would it not seem impossible for the Israelites to renew their ingratitude and their revolt? But let us reflect upon our own weakness, the many resistances we have shown; let us examine how many times we have remained faithful to the pressing inspirations of grace, to the light of faith, and we shall learn to believe in the insubordination and in the ingratitude of man.

III.

GUILTY REMINISCENCE.

THE Israelites continued their march the third day after their departure. Near night, the pillar gave the signal to encamp, but scarcely had

the tents been erected, than they again loudly murmured. The strangers and the slaves were the first to complain. They were seen lying at the entrance of their tents, lamenting and moaning upon their sad fate: "Alas!" said they, "when shall we have meat and fish like that which we had in Egypt, and those delicious melons, those cucumbers, and those onions which we had at discretion? Here we are in want of every thing, we lead a poor and miserable life in this desert, where we get nothing but manna, always manna!" The Israelites held the same language, and the Lord was filled with just wrath. The holy legislator was deeply touched at the sight of their tears, and on hearing them sigh and regret the meat and onions of Egypt, he became so afflicted that he exclaimed: "O Lord! shall my sorrow be forever? shall I forever carry the weight of the wickedness of this people? They ask for meat, and where shall I find it to give them? for on all sides they cry: 'Give us meat instead of this manna that disgusts us.' No, O Lord, I can no longer support their murmurs, and their ingratitude overwhelms me. I pray you, therefore, to withdraw me from their midst, then, at least, I shall be delivered from this torrent of evil which renders life odious to me." God is not offended at the

frank and benign liberty with which His servants speak to Him, and the prayer of Moses was favorably heard. "Be not discouraged," said the Lord, to Moses, "for I am willing to afford you consolation. Assemble seventy of the elders of Israel—those whom you know to be the masters and the doctors of your people. You will conduct them to the entrance of the tabernacle; there I shall communicate to them the spirit of my wisdom, so that they may share with you the weight of your affliction. As for the people, say to them: 'Purify yourselves of your sins. To-morrow you shall have the meat you desire, for I have heard you say: Who will give us meat for food?' Well, then, you shall have meat not only for a day, but for a month." "What! O Lord," replied Moses, who was still confused and troubled, "there are 600,000 fighting men, without reckoning women and children; we are in the midst of the desert, and yet, you say: 'I shall give them meat for a month;' all our oxen and sheep, all the fishes of the sea, would scarcely suffice for their consumption of the same." "And since when," said the Lord, "is the arm of the Lord weak and impotent? Execute my orders, and you shall behold the accomplishment of my promises." (Numb. xi.)

The greatest of all punishments inflicted upon gluttons and sensualists, is to abandon them entirely to their intemperance. The following chapter will give us an explanation of the above.

IV.

THE GRAVES OF LUST.

At this gentle reproof, Moses returned to his duty, and he obeyed the Lord. He therefore assembled the seventy wise men as elders, whom God had named to him, and he conducted them to the entrance of the tabernacle. Then God descended in the midst of a cloud, and filled them with a spirit of wisdom, and they spake by inspiration.

Two of those venerable men had not attended the summons of Moses; and through modesty or fear, they were not, like the others, at the entrance of the tabernacle; nevertheless, they spake as prophets, for the Spirit of God was in them. Moses was informed of the occurrence; and Josue, who was zealously attached to the holy legislator, spoke to him of the impropriety of others usurping rights which should be reserved to the patriarch. "You are mistaken, Josue," replied Moses, quietly; "your zeal for me is at fault. Would to God that all the

children of Israel were filled with the Spirit of the Lord, and that they spoke by inspiration!"

When Moses entered the camp, accompanied by the elders, there blew, by order of God, a strong westerly wind, and there came from across the sea a large quantity of quails, that flew around at a height of two cubits from the ground, and at a short distance from the camp. They were in such a multitude, that they were comparable to the dust of the earth, and to the sand of the sea. The children of Israel were overjoyed at this novel sight, and they eagerly rushed from their tents to make an ample provision thereof, but soon had they to pay dear for their base gluttony! The Israelites who had remained faithful, profited by those favors with gratitude, and the moderate use they made of them was pleasing to God; not so with those murmurers who sinned by covetousness. They believed themselves in safety; their provisions were not exhausted; they continued to eat on with greediness; and whilst in the very act of doing so, God struck them in His anger and in their sin, and they died victims to their intemperance. A day was spent burying the dead, and thence this place was called *The Graves of Lust*, because there the prevaricators died victims to their gluttony.

The Israelites continued their march to Haseroth, at which place they encamped. (Numb. xi.)

The wise man, nay, I may say the reasonable man, knows that gluttony is a vice that degrades, that engenders serious diseases, cruel infirmities, and that it frequently causes death. He is well aware, besides, that this passion offends God, and that he does not live for the pure pleasure of eating, but that he eats to live, and to serve God. O men! be conscious of your dignity, and be sober. You have been created to God's image; why then allow yourselves to be overcome by those animal passions which degrade and kill you?

V.

A LEPROSY OF SEVEN DAYS.

It seemed as though the servant of God should never be exempt from pain; for when the Israelites were quelled by severe punishment, he still found a source of trouble in his own family. On arriving at Haseroth, Mary and Aaron quarrelled with the legislator's wife, because the latter manifested a certain scorn towards them, on account of the extraordinary favors that Moses received from God; on the other hand, she was insulted by Mary and

Aaron, who gave her the appellations of stranger, beggar, Ethiopian ; they went so far as to upbraid the friend of God. "Is Moses," said they, "the only one to whom God communicates His will? Has God not also spoken to us?" Moses, being the most gentle and the most patient of men, heeded them not, but the Lord took up his defence. Oh ! happy are the oppressed who trust in the Almighty ! Mary was the principal cause of this dispute ; she was older than her brothers, and God had honored her with certain communications, but the temptation was great, and her virtue weak !

Scarcely had they spoken, when God convoked the family at the entrance of the tabernacle. On reaching the entrance, God descended in the midst of a majestic cloud that stopped at the sanctuary. He then called Aaron and Mary : "Hearken to me," said the Lord : "If there be prophets amongst you, it is merely by visions or by mysterious dreams that I speak to them ; but Moses, my faithful servant, the minister of my house, the depositary of my secrets ; I speak to him without mystery, without figure, without enigma. What then is your audacity to compare yourselves to my servant, to Moses ? and you dare grieve him by your taunts !" Thus did the Lord speak, and He vanished in

the cloud. Meantime, Mary was covered with a leprosy for her murmurs against God. Knowing the fervor and the efficacy of the prayers of Moses, Aaron sought his presence, and he exclaimed: "My Lord, and my brother, we have sinned; we own our blindness, and we have been justly punished. Our sister is covered with a leprosy which gnaws into her very flesh. Can you remain unmoved at such a sight. Can you suffer her to be banished from society, and to die in abandonment?" The holy patriarch was overwhelmed with grief. "My God," cried he, "restore our sister to health, for we cherish her tenderly!" "What!" answered the Lord; "had she offended her father, should she not conceal her shame in an obscure retreat, at least during seven days. She has disrespected me by disrespecting you; she shall be banished from out of the camp, and after due repentance, she may return, and I shall forgive her."

Such was the severity of God towards Mary; withal, He cherished her; He had endowed her with the gift of prophecy, and she was called prophetess, but she had offended the friend of God. Abiding by those commands, Mary retired from the camp, and, during the term of seven days, she was deprived of any

communication whatsoever with the Israelites. The dreadful disease wherewith Mary was afflicted in punishment of her murmurs, served as a cure to the pride of her heart. Such should be also the effects of the maladies which God may send us ; they should destroy our vices, our passions ; they should strengthen our virtues, and fortify us against danger.

A MILLION OF MEN EXILED.

I.

TWELVE SPIES.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1645.

WHEN the sister of Moses was perfectly restored to health, she re-entered the camp, and the pillar gave the signal to continue the march. It was the second day of the fourth month, and on the same day they arrived in Pharau, and in view of the promised land. There they were to take definite measures against the people who were in possession of the country. By order of God, Moses chose twelve men who were the heads of each tribe ; amongst those were Caleb and Josue. "Go forth," said he to them, "respond to the wish of the nation, and enter the land of Canaan by the south ;

penetrate to the first mountains whence you can reconnoitre. Note the strength of these people and their character; observe if they be warlike, brave, or cowardly, if the country be populous or thinly inhabited. You will also examine the nature of the land, if it be fertile or barren, if the city be encompassed by walls, or if it be open and without fortifications."

The spies departed, and when they arrived at Canaan, they explored the country, and they studied the character and the inclinations of the inhabitants. At length, after an absence of forty days, they returned to the camp. They brought back figs and pomegranates which they had gathered, and a bunch of grapes of such an enormous size, that it had to be carried on a lever by two men. The Israelites eagerly assembled around Moses and Aaron, to hear the account of the travellers. "The grapes," said the latter, "speak of the great fertility of the soil, and you are not deceived in thinking that streams of milk and honey flow therein." So far, Moses was delighted, but what was his surprise when he heard them relate that the country was not at all what the Israelites supposed it to be.

"It will not," added they, "be easy to conquer a people so much superior to our own;

furthermore, this country has many well-built and strongly fortified cities, and they are inhabited by giants, whom it would be impossible to expel." This unfaithful account excited a general and violent sedition, so much so, that they wanted to stone Moses. However, two of the spies, named Caleb and Josue endeavored to persuade the Israelites that they were deceived, and that their alarm was without foundation. "Let us march against this people," exclaimed they; "we shall force them to abandon those possessions which have been promised to us; nothing is impossible when the Lord is with us." But their colleagues contradicted them by saying, "Caleb imposes on you, for how could we attack a people so much more powerful than our own? True, the country is fertile, but its inhabitants are descendants of Enac; they are of a gigantic stature, and their very aspect would strike terror into the soul of the most intrepid. We are mere locusts when compared to them, and they would crush us, and annihilate our race." The dismay of the children of Israel was now so great, that Moses thought it fit to defer any further communication with them till the day following. They dispersed accordingly, and Moses retired to his tent. (Numb. xiii.)

It is impossible to gain Heaven (the true promised land) without opposing our enemies. Let us then arm ourselves with the buckler of faith, and attack them bravely. God fights for His faithful servants.

II.

A PENITENCE OF FORTY YEARS.

THE night was spent in tears and in lamentations, and early the next morning a dreadful confusion broke out in the camp. The people murmured loudly against Moses and Aaron, and they declared that they would sooner die than enter that promised land, wherein they might become the victims of a formidable enemy. "God," cried they, "who has promised us His protection, bears wrath against us, and we have been carried out of bondage but to perish by the sword. Far better return to Egypt!" and they said one to the other: "Let us choose a leader and go thither." In this cruel dilemma, Moses endeavored to reassure them: "Why should you fear?" said he to them, "the Lord will fight for you: bear in mind the miracles He has operated in your favor when He delivered you out of the hands of the Egyptians. He is your leader, your protector; you have

witnessed the ineffable goodness He has shown you in this wilderness; He has never ceased to shield you and to love you as the most tender of fathers."

In vain did Moses and Aaron remonstrate with them, they were deaf to their soothing words; and in this extremity, the holy legislator and his brother prostrated themselves, and implored the help of the Almighty, whilst Caleb and Josue tore their garments in despair, and they rushed into their midst to appease the tumult by their earnest entreaties. "Hear us!" said they, "we have visited Canaan; it is the most beautiful country in the world; we shall conquer it with God's help. Do not irritate the Lord; remain in submission; we fear not those giants whom we shall devour with the same facility as a hungry man devours a piece of bread."

Alas! the tenderness of Moses, the eloquence of Aaron, the zeal and the efforts of Caleb and Josue, were of no avail. Far from being moved, the Israelites became more and more mutinous, and they wanted to stone those who sought to console and to calm them. Suddenly, the cloud that rested on the tabernacle, changed into a devouring fire, and it was the visible sign of the just indignation of an out-

raged God, who addressed these words to Moses: "How long must I endure the insults of this ungrateful people? how long will they remain incredulous to my promise? The moment of vengeance has come. I shall exterminate this nation. Fear not, Moses, my faithful servant, you shall govern a nation greater and more powerful than this." "Alas!" responded Moses, "if you destroy this people, the Egyptians and other nations will blaspheme your holy name, and they will insult your majesty. They know you to be the God of our fathers, that you manifest yourself to us in all your glory, that you nourish us with the bread of Heaven, and they will learn your vengeance, and they will say: 'Their God has conducted them in sight of the promised land, but unable to lead them further, they have all perished in the desert.' Glorify your name, O my God, according to your promise, for you have said: 'The Lord is merciful, He is patient.' Temper, then, your justice to the weakness of this people, I implore you, O Lord." "I shall pardon them," answered the Lord, "and they shall not all die by the plague; but I am the living God, and I verily say that my glory shall not hereby suffer, nor by the pardon I now grant them. Tell them, therefore, that

the living God is incensed against them ; that He has declared that none of those who have attained the age of twenty shall enter the promised land, but that they shall wander in the desert for forty years. Caleb and Josue shall alone be excepted, for they have taken no part in the sedition. All others shall die, and they shall be buried in the sands of the desert."

This dreadful sentence began to be put into execution by the death of ten of the guilty spies. They were struck dead by the hand of God, in the midst of the multitude of the people. When Moses had informed the Israelites of the will of the Lord, they were seized with fear and terror, and they shed tears of profound grief. (Numb. xiv.)

Behold now a million of men, condemned to wander for forty years in a wilderness ! their most ardent hopes are blasted, by reason of their murmurs, which they have so constantly and ungratefully repeated ; there they must die, there they shall be buried, beneath the sands of the desert !

Such hard-heartedness is scarcely credible ! but alas ! are we not ourselves prone to ingratitude ? We murmur repeatedly against Providence, and we forget the love and the goodness of God, who cares for us as a tender

mother, and conducts us through the dangers of this life ; and in spite of our enemies, to the promised land, Heaven !

III.

A COMPLETE DEFEAT.

THE next day, a rash bravery furthered, in spite of the views of God, the punishment of the transgressors. Without being assured of the protection of the Lord, they presented themselves before the enemy. They supposed that they would thus make reparation for their faults, and that God would be touched at their generous resolution. Therefore, they took up arms, and they said to the holy legislator : “ We have sinned against the Lord our God, and re-resolved to appease His anger, we shall ascend the mountain, and make an attack upon the enemy.” Whilst their leaders were conversing with Moses, they hastened on towards the mountain of Canaan, and presented themselves before the Amalekites. “ Why do you thus expose yourselves to danger ? ” said Moses to them ; “ it is not the will of God that you should now give battle ; by so doing you will transgress His orders, and His protection will not accompany you. Would you perish by the sword of your enemy ? ”

Strange perversity of the human mind ! This mutinous people feared naught in the moment of danger, and they trembled when they were in safety. And, indeed, Moses spoke to them in vain, for their base pusillanimity gave place to a presumptuous blindness. They sought, then, the Amalekites, who, in their turn, rushed upon the Israelites with such fury, that they were completely routed and driven back to Horma, a city of Canaan, where a large number of them were slain. Moses had not entertained the slightest hope of the success of his people ; he therefore took no part in the battle, and he did not suffer the ark to accompany them. At night, the dead and scattered bodies of the Israelites were collected, and of several thousand combatants, there remained but a handful of stragglers and wounded men.

After a few days' rest, the people of Israel were obliged to leave the neighborhood of the promised land, and they retraced the road to the desert, to wander during forty years, as the just Judge had decreed it. (Numb. xiv.)

After such terrible and striking examples, who would not abhor with heart and soul, the disobedience, the incredulity, the ingratitude of men towards God ? These poisonous sources

are the cause of revolts against superiors, and of the unhappiness of men, of families, and of states.

AMBITION JUSTLY PUNISHED.

I.

THE REVOLT OF THREE CHIEFS.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1643.

THE Israelites were beginning to feel the effects of this long and painful journey to which their crimes had condemned them, and Moses was about taking the rest of which he was so much in need, when there broke out the most violent sedition that had as yet taken place. It was secretly planned amongst the most affluent men of the principal tribes; their knowledge and their authority affording them full scope for the execution of their ambitious schemes. Core, of the tribe of Levi, was displeased to see Aaron raised to the dignity of sovereign pontiff, and his family alone enjoying the sacerdotal honors. Dathan and Abiron, of the tribe of Reuben, the oldest of the sons of Jacob, saw, also, with feelings of envy, that Moses, a man

of the tribe of Levi, should be in possession of so much power. Therefore, these three ambitious men rebelled against the patriarch and his brother, and they excited two hundred and fifty of the Israelites to follow their example; they were all heads of large families, and distinguished amongst the children of Israel. All preliminary arrangements being made, the chiefs of the conspiracy boldly presented themselves before Moses and Aaron. "You have sufficiently governed us," said they; "resign, therefore, the honors which you have usurped till this day. Does it not satisfy you to be as an equal amongst your brethren? Are we not sanctified too? Wherefore then do you rule over us with such pride?" On hearing these reproaches, Moses fell prostrate in the presence of the Lord, and he implored His assistance in so critical a moment. Then, as though suddenly inspired, he rose to speak to Core and to his troop, in the following terms: "The Lord shall be our arbiter; He will make known to us those whom He has chosen to fulfil the offices of His altars. But, to-morrow morning, you, Core, and your adherents, be present in this tabernacle; in your censers you shall take fire from the altar of perfumes and you shall offer incense in the presence of the Lord. God

will make His voice heard, and we shall know whom He has chosen amongst us. Children of Levi, you are full of foolish pretensions, and beware of the danger of your designs. Is it because God has admitted you nearer in His presence than the rest of the children of Israel, that you, Core, and your brothers, should regard yourselves worthy of entering the holy priesthood, for which, however, you are not destined? Remember, it is not a man whom you and your followers attack, but it is God Himself; and who is Aaron, that he should be the object of your murmurs? he has not taken upon himself the honors of priesthood, and if he be pontiff, it is by the express order of the Almighty."

Those remonstrances were of little or no avail, and Moses, in despair, turned to those who were about to usurp the temporal power, and he prevailed upon them to show more docility. He sent for Dathan and Abiron; they were absent; but they responded proudly: "We shall not go thither. We who have been driven from the fertile country into which we were on the point of entering! We who are obliged to wander in those frightful deserts wherein we must perish! How well he has fulfilled his promise! Where is the land flowing with milk and honey? Are

we not indeed in possession of rich crops and fertile vines? Ah! why not blind us at once, so as we shall not witness our miserable position! No! we shall not go thither, we shall not appear before him!" What insolence! what seditious language! Moses could not refrain from being filled with indignation. "You know, O my God," exclaimed he, "and they know themselves, if I have merited these reproaches and these insults. I am overwhelmed with woe; I have never offended them, and they would see me die of grief. They merit not, O God, the mercy which you have so constantly shown them." In spite of these words of momentary indignation, Moses hoped for the conversion rather than the punishment of his people. After having again summoned the prevaricators, to appear the next day in the tabernacle, the holy legislator retired, trembling with fear of the rigor of God's wrath against this obstinate race. He hoped, nevertheless, that they would reflect upon their guilty designs, and that they would repent, but alas! those hopes were cruelly blasted! (Numb. xvi.)

What a dreadful resistance against the authority of the holy legislator; this man who was the right hand, the servant, the friend of God! What blindness, what insolence, what audacity

on the part of those ambitious murmurers! Cursed by God and abandoned to His vengeance, what shall become of them?

II.

DESTRUCTION OF THE REBELS.

ON the following day, Moses and Aaron repaired to the tabernacle. They placed themselves on one side of the entrance, whilst Core and his two hundred and fifty conspirators were on the other. A multitude of people had come to witness the deplorable scene which was about to take place. The cloud which enveloped the tabernacle shone suddenly with a luminous fire and betokened the presence of the Sovereign Being. "Separate from this cursed band," said He, "for I shall annihilate it in my anger." On hearing this terrible threat, Moses and his brother prostrated themselves and cried: "O Lord God Almighty, you who know the hearts of all men, would you punish all those here present for the crime of this impious man and his faction?" "No," replied the Lord, "the offenders shall alone be punished; as for the people, order them to retire to their tents." Moses, followed by the elders, went immediately into

the neighborhood of the tents of Dathan and Abiron : “Fly,” said he to the people, “remain not here, touch not whatsoever belongs to the conspirators, for fear of being implicated in their crimes and of being smitten by the same punishment.” This order was obeyed, and when the people had abandoned their homes, the rebels appeared on the threshold of their doors, with their wives, their children, and their accomplices. “If these men,” continued Moses, “die by a natural death, and if God do not punish them in some extraordinary manner, you may then regard me as an impostor ; but if God performs a miracle never before witnessed, if He command the earth to open, to swallow them up, then you will agree that I am the minister of the Most High, and that they are the blasphemers of His holy name.” Scarcely had Moses spoken, when the earth opened beneath the feet of the rebels, and cast into an eternal abyss, men, women, children, riches, tents, and pavilions ; every thing disappeared, and the hard-hearted prevaricators were all at once buried in one dark and frightful tomb. Meanwhile, a devouring fire was kindled by the breath of God, and it destroyed the two hundred and fifty impious intruders, for having penetrated into the sanctuary to offer a sacrilegious incense.

Whilst so many guilty men were cast into a horrible abyss, the Israelites who had come to witness this spectacle, rushed hither and thither, crying : “ Let us fly, for the earth may open and swallow us up.” After this sad event, Eleazar, the son of the high priest, collected all the censers which had been used by the impious conspirators, and he caused them to be melted, and then to be wrought into plates, which were hung at the altar, in order that the Israelites might remember this dreadful example.

Those who enter into holy orders with a view of gain, with ambitious or sordid feelings, should tremble in the presence of a just God, who commands His ministry to be sacred, for those only who are destined to priesthood, as Aaron and his sons, have the right to fulfil the duties thereof, inasmuch as they have received from Heaven the gifts and the qualities which so holy a calling demands.

III.

THE PONTIFF WITH CENSER IN HAND.

ONE would really be inclined to believe that the spirit of evil had taken full possession of the children of Israel ; for the next day they

recommenced their murmurs against Moses and his brother, as they sallied forth together to the sacrifice at the tabernacle. All of a sudden, a frantic multitude rushed towards them, overwhelming them with bitter reproaches, and a confusion of voices audaciously repeated: "You, Moses, you, Aaron, are the executioners, the murderers of your brothers!" The tumult increased, the murmurs changed into clamor and outcries; the commotion was general, and the servants of God had scarcely time to take shelter in the tabernacle. No sooner had they entered than the cloud enveloped the sanctuary to prevent the sacrilegious approach of the rebels, and to manifest to them the majesty of an angered God. However, Moses prayed, sparing neither tears nor invocations to appease the Lord's wrath, and to obtain from Him the forgiveness of this ungrateful multitude: and the two brothers remained humbly prostrated before the Divine majesty: "Ah! brother," suddenly exclaimed Moses, "rise, take speedily your censer, and burn incense to the Lord; prostrate yourself between our Divine Master and His people, and pray for this unhappy nation. It is already time, for an injured God is about to exterminate them in His fury." Aaron, clad in his sacerdotal robes and the

censer in hand, goes forth in their midst, whilst the fire and flame consume all around. The pontiff lingers imploringly ; he places himself between the living and the dead ; he prays ; he reminds God of His promises and of His alliance ; he offers perfumes and incense, and God at length hearkens to his fervent entreaties. The fire is extinguished, and the plague ceases, but only after sacrificing 14,700 victims, not including those who had perished on the day previous. After this terrible vengeance of the Lord, Aaron returned to the tabernacle with Moses, to celebrate a thanksgiving for the mercy which He had manifested in favor of the rest of the people.

Is it not pitiful to behold, that ere the last punishment of this wicked people was at an end, and whilst the last dreadful conflagration was yet smouldering before their eyes, they again rebelled against Moses and his brother ?

But do we not find frequent examples of the same perversity amongst ourselves ? If the guilty ones be spared, assuredly it is the minister of the Lord ; it is Aaron, with censer in hand, who turns the wrath of the Lord away from us ; it is the blood of the spotless victim that cries out for mercy ; it is the intercession of the faithful, humbly prostrated in the sanctu-

ary, appeasing His anger, and staying His avenging hand, ready to strike the transgressors of His holy law.

IV.

THE ROD IN BLOSSOM.

THE just severity which God had used towards His people was effectual, inasmuch as the Israelites confessed their faults and persevered in their good dispositions for the space of many years. After Moses had prayed in the temple with his brother Aaron, he spoke to the Israelites in the following terms, and in the name of the Almighty: "The Lord, your God, who desires to protect you as a father, but whom you force to treat you as slaves, is now resolved to give you an incontestable proof of the choice which He has made of Aaron for His high-priest. Let each tribe present a rod, upon which will be engraven the name of the prince or the chief of the tribe. There will be twelve of them, according to the number of tribes which compose the people of God. That of Levi will be inscribed with the name of Aaron, and it will be the thirteenth. I have order to place them in the sanctuary, in the presence of the Lord. One of these rods will blossom, and

it will be that engraven with the name of the pontiff whom the Lord has chosen. This will terminate all disputes, all jealousies, all murmurs. The twelve rods were brought, and Moses placed them in the ark of the covenant. The following day he entered the Holy of Holies, and he found that the rod of the tribe of Levi had blossomed ; it was full of buds and flowers, and it bore almonds. The holy legislator took it, and exhibited it to the astonished crowds, and they were fully convinced that the Lord had appointed Aaron as their pontiff. God expressed His desire, that so glorious a proof of the legitimate ministry of Aaron should be preciousy kept in the tabernacle. He therefore commanded Moses to place the mysterious rod in the Holy of Holies, with the tables of the law and the urn of manna, so that it might serve as a memorial to forewarn the children of Israel against the dangers attending murmurs and sedition. (Numb. xvii.)

The rod of Aaron blossomed, and it bore fruit until the extinction of the synagogue ; that of the priests of the new law will bear fruit till the end of the world. Jesus Christ has said it, and He speaks not in vain.

Let us respect the Lord's anointed, for He has marked them with an indelible character

of sanctity. Yes, let us honor the ministers of the new law, in order that we be not smitten like the prevaricators of old.

TERM OF FORTY YEARS OF PROSCRIPTION.

I.

DEATH OF MARY.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1605.

ALL the events which we have related, happened during the two first years since the departure of the people of Israel from Egypt, and during the thirty-eight years which follow Scripture does not mention any thing of importance; there were fifty-one encampments, different marches and counter-marches which were accomplished in the deserts of Arabia, around the mountains of Seir and Idumæa, in the neighborhood of the Red Sea, thence the people retraced from the south to the north, above the mountains of Edom, to reach the promised land. Thus did the Israelites accomplish the sentence of the Lord, who had condemned them to perish in the wilderness. Nevertheless, God continued to watch over His people, the manna supplied them with food,

the miraculous pillar gave them light and shelter; the communications of Moses with God were as familiar and as frequent as ever, and by a miracle of Providence, the shoes and the clothes of so many men were not worn out by their long journeys.

At length in the course of the first month of the Mosaic year, the Israelites reached Cades, which is situated in the neighborhood of Canaan, where, forty years before, they had also encamped. It was here where Mary, sister of Moses and Aaron, died at one hundred and thirty years of age. She was interred with all the pomp due to a distinguished prophetess. Mary had rendered herself dear to the nation by her assiduous care of the Hebrew women, and for the solicitude which she had for all those under her charge; moreover the people were greatly indebted to her for having contributed to save Moses in his infancy from the waters of the Nile. Her loss was deeply felt by the Israelites, and particularly by her two brothers. Mary was one of those who had not the happiness of entering the promised land, because, like the Israelites, she had murmured in the desert. (Numb. xx.)

What grief and pain Moses had to endure during the whole course of his life! Why then

should we complain at the slightest contradiction, at the slightest opposition, which we may perchance meet on our way to Heaven.

II.

THE WATER OF CONTRADICTION.

THE death of Mary was not the only painful occurrence during the encampment at Cades. No water was to be found, and instead of imploring the assistance of God, the children of Israel renewed their former murmurs. They gathered tumultuously around Aaron and his brother, and they reproached them as the cause of their wretched position. "Would to God," cried they, "that we had died with our brethren? why should we remain in this desert to die of thirst with our families and our flocks? Why have we been carried out of Egypt to sojourn in those burning sands which we can neither plough nor cultivate, and where there are neither figs nor raisins, nor pomegranates, nor a drop of water to quench our thirst?" And thus did this ungrateful people ask favors of God! That which most irritated the Lord, and afflicted His ministers, was to witness their impatience, and their want of trust, whilst so many wonders were being accomplished in

their favor. Moses and Aaron endeavored to appease them, and they entered the tabernacle to implore the Lord in their behalf. "Lord God of Israel," cried they, "listen to the prayers of your people, and be merciful towards them, give them water to drink, and they will cease their murmurs." God was touched at the confidence of His servants, and He surrounded them with His glory, giving Moses His orders in these terms: "Assemble the people near the rock on the mountain; approach it, you and your brother, and command the waters to flow, and the people and their herds can then satisfy their thirst." Moses took the rod which was in the presence of the Lord, he assembled the people, and accompanied by his brother, he placed himself near the rock. The Israelites were in anxious expectation. "People of little faith," said he to them, "rebellious children, listen: "You ask for water, and do you merit it? Do you suppose that my brother and I can cause water to flow from this rock?" Hereupon, a certain doubt swept across the mind of Moses: he did not doubt that God could not, but that He would not perform this miracle; nevertheless, Moses struck the rock, and seeing that the water did not come forth; he struck

it again with more confidence, and immediately the water sprang from the rock in abundance, allowing both man and beast to quench their thirst.

The servant of God was punished for his want of confidence in the Lord. "You have doubted my word," said the Lord, "and you shall not enter the promised land."

This spring was called *The Water of Contradiction*, because there the Israelites had renewed their murmurs. (Numb. xx.) Such was the fault of Moses and of Aaron,—a fault which might escape the most just, the most holy of men; yet God punished the transgressors thereof, by reason of their character, their rank, and their holiness, placing them in evidence amongst the people.

When we consider the slight faults of those eminent personages, of saints who have contemplated the majesty of God, punished so severely, have we not reason to tremble for ourselves?

III.

THE REMAINS OF THE PONTIFF.

FROM Cades, Moses sent ambassadors to the king of Edom, to beg of him to allow his people to pass through his dominions. He

assured him that no damage should be done to his lands, nor to his vines, that no water should be drawn from his wells, but that they would continue their journey by the public road, without straying to the right or to the left. Edom responded proudly: "You shall not pass through my dominions or I shall meet you at the head of my troops." "We merely ask the liberty of the high road," said the ambassadors, "and we are disposed to pay you amply for whatever water we may use." The king still refused to grant them their desire; and to avoid any further communications with them, he made preparations to oppose Israel at the head of a large army. But the Lord had forbidden the Israelites to take up arms against the people of this country, that is to say, against the Moabites and the Ammonites, descendants of Lot, and against the Idumæans, descendants of Edom or Esau; so that having no free passage to pursue their march, they were obliged to go a roundabout way to reach the promised land. They first bent their course to Mosera, at the foot of Mount Hor, and situated at the extremity of the land of Edom. During this encampment Moses had a painful duty to perform. The Lord called His faithful servant, and told him to inform Aaron

to dispose himself to die. "He shall not enter the promised land," said the Lord, "for I bear in mind the doubts which he entertained at *The Waters of Contradiction*. Take then Aaron and his son Eleazar to Mount Hor, and upon it you shall divest the high-priest of his sacerdotal robes, and of all the insignia of his dignity, and you will give them to Eleazar his son. After this ceremony, Aaron will expire in your arms, and he will go and meet his fathers." With what admirable courage these two great men, who were sure of meeting each other in the bosom of Abraham before the end of the year, submitted themselves to the orders of the sovereign Master! The whole nation was witness of this touching spectacle.

They ascended therefore the mountain, and in view of the multitude of the children of Israel, Moses, with his own hands divested his brother of his tiara, his ephod, the breast-plate and the pontifical robe, with which he invested Eleazar. Ere this ceremony was concluded, Aaron expired without sickness or pain, in the arms of his brother and of his son. Such was the death of the first high-priest of the people of God, after thirty-eight years of glorious but arduous labor in the holy ministry. Moses descended the mountain and presented the new

pontiff to the nation. Aaron was buried on the mountain; tears of deep regret were shed over his tomb, and for thirty days the grief was general.

What a beautiful, what a touching death! and moreover, what greatness of soul in this holy pontiff! He sees himself stripped of all the insignia of his dignity, and condemned to die in sight of the promised land, and he submitted to this rigorous sentence with the greatest resignation. Aaron's death was truly that of a saint, of a friend of God.

May our life thus terminate in peace, in resignation, in expiation of our venial sins, and of the pain due to our past iniquities!

IV.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

WHILST the Israelites were quietly encamped at Mosera, they were surprised and attacked by the king of Canaan, sovereign of Arad. The king was at first victorious, and he made a large number of the Israelites prisoners. But the latter made a vow to God, and the victory passed to their side. The idolaters were defeated, several of their cities were burned, and their king found death in the combat.

The people of God continued their march. They crossed the mountains of Seir, and passed the Jordan. These winding marches caused the people to murmur; they complained of the length of the voyage, of the want of bread and water, and of the disgust they now had for the manna. God made them again feel His anger, by sending serpents whose bites caused a dreadful mortality among them. The calamity only ceased when Moses, by order of the Lord, raised a brazen serpent which, when those who had been bitten looked upon it they were healed.

This serpent was the figure of Jesus Christ, who, raised on the Cross, was to cure the wounds which Adam's sin had inflicted on man.

V.

THE GIANT OG.

As the Israelites drew near the River Jordan, they entered upon a fertile country, forming part of the promised land. It was inhabited by the Amorites, a colony of the descendants of Canaan. This was the first great conquest of the people of God. Sehon, their king, refused to give them a free passage through his estates, and, assembling his army, he advanced

against the Israelites, and gave them battle; but he was completely defeated by Moses, who gained over him a great and glorious victory. His soldiers devastated the country, took the fortified cities, and, by order of God, they put to the sword all the inhabitants. In short, the country fell into the hands of the victorious. Many of the Amorites still remained rebellious, and for this reason the Israelites advanced towards the kingdom of Basan, which extended in the neighborhood of the River Jordan. Og, their king, was one of the race of giants; he was of a gigantic stature, as likewise his soldiers, so that at the sight of these formidable foes, terror spread amongst the children of Israel; but the Lord was with them, and He said to Moses: "Fear not, for I have delivered your enemies into your hands." Og, at the head of a formidable army, hastened to oppose the passage of the people of God; but he was slain in the combat, with his children, and all his subjects were exterminated. The Israelites laid waste the country; they raised the siege of the cities, and fell into possession of over sixty strongholds; they also took their flocks and their herds, and they enriched themselves with considerable spoils. (Numb. xxi.; Deut. iii.)

The forty years of penitence had now elapsed, and none of those who had been condemned to die in the desert now lived; so that the Israelites were on the point of entering into the promised land.

BALAC AND HIS PROPHET.

I.

THE AVARICIOUS PROPHET.

AFTER these victories, the Israelites established their camp in the plains of Moab, on the borders of the Jordan, and opposite the city of Jericho. Balac, king of this country, being alarmed at the success of Moses over the Amorites, looked upon himself as lost, were he not to use the most expedient means to oppose the invasion of Israel. At that time there was a famous prophet, named Balaam; he lived at Pethor, a city which was situated on the Euphrates. When Balac saw the consternation of his subjects, as also that of the Midianites, "This people," exclaimed the king, "will exterminate us!" and he sent ambassadors to the famous prophet; they were depositaries of a

large sum of money, and they had orders to say to him: "Some wandering but formidable tribes of Egypt have encamped in our neighborhood; they are in multitudes; they swarm the country, and they threaten invasion and pillage; come forth with us, and curse this formidable nation, in order that we may defeat them, and drive them from our frontiers; for we know that blessed are those whom you bless; cursed are those whom you curse!" Meantime, they exhibited the gold which should be the price of his malediction. This false prophet had some knowledge of the traditions of the patriarchs who had sojourned in those countries; so that fearing to engage himself in this undertaking, he told the ambassadors that he had to consult with the Lord. "Remain in my house this night," said he to them; "to-morrow I shall give you an answer." And, in truth, the Lord of the Hebrews spoke to Balaam: "What is the wish of those strangers in your house?" said the Lord; "and what is the motive of their journey hither?" "They are," answered Balaam, "ambassadors sent by Balac, king of Moab, and they have orders to tell me that a formidable people of Egypt swarm the surface of the earth; that they threaten devastation. 'Come and curse them,' said they,

“so that we may drive them from our frontiers.” “Follow them not. Curse not this people,” said the Lord, “for I have blessed them.” Hereupon Balaam rose early next morning, and said to the travellers: “Return to your country, the Lord forbids me to accompany you.” Having heard this refusal, Balac was not disconcerted, and he sent back a more powerful, a more honorable deputation from his court. “Here is what Balac, king of Moab, asks of you,” said they. “Do not refuse to follow my ambassadors. Come, and I shall load you with riches and honors. You have the choice of your own reward, but curse Israel?” “If your master would give me his palace full of gold and silver,” replied Balaam, “I could not change the words which the Lord has put into my mouth. I am not, therefore, the master to add to, or to lessen, one word of what he has said. However, give me a little time; remain again in my house. I shall communicate with the Lord, and I shall inform you whether His answer be the same.” Probably the prophet did not wish to lose so happy an occasion of enriching himself. God spoke again to Balaam: “Since these strangers desire you to follow them,” said He, “go; I am not opposed to your departure; but be careful to do my will in every thing.”

The following morning Balaam rose early, and he apprised the Israelites of the will of the Lord. They immediately set off—the prophet following slowly upon an ass, and accompanied by two servants. (Numb. xxii.)

God permits Balaam to depart, because his wish was to go, notwithstanding inspirations and suppressed remorse. God often abandons the hardened sinner to his own evil courses; and how deplorable is that abandonment! O Lord, make us submissive to your voice; punish us if we are guilty; but do not abandon us!

II.

THE REPRIMANDS OF AN ASS.

ON the road, Balaam bethought of words which might assure him a rich reward. Such were not the views of the Lord, who was indignant at the cupidity and the treachery of this impostor. Balaam merited to be chastised there and then; but God wished to use him as an example; so He deferred his punishment.

The angel of the Lord, under a human form, but terrible and menacing, appeared on the way before the ass that bore the prophet. Balaam did not perceive him; but the ass saw him

brandishing a sword, the point of which he threatened to bury in his flanks. Seized with fear, the ass set off through the country, Balaam whipping him the while, and endeavoring to make him follow the road; but the ass rushed into a narrow passage, in which it was impossible to turn either to the right or to the left, and the angel was there with uplifted hand to oppose his progress onward. At length Balaam was precipitated to the ground, and entering into a great rage, he struck violently the beast, which would have been killed, had it not been that the Lord interfered, and performed a miracle as great as it was admirable, and which perhaps was without example: the ass spoke in plain words, and he reproached his master, for his cruelty towards him. However, the Lord opened the eyes of the prophet, who beheld the angel with the drawn sword. At this sight, he fell prostrate before the Lord. "I am here," said the angel, "to oppose your designs, for you pursue the way of perversity. If your ass had not returned—if it had forced its passage thitherward—my vengeance would have fallen upon you, Balaam." "I have sinned," said the prophet, "and if this undertaking displease you, O Lord, I am ready to retrace my steps." "You can continue your

journey," answered the Lord; "but bear in mind that you must do my will." The prophet, therefore, continued his journey towards Moab. (Numb. xxii.)

Were God to renew this miracle now-a-days—were He to make animals speak—how many occasions would He not have to reproach us for the abuse of His precious gifts. By our passions and our vices we degrade ourselves, and thereby we place ourselves far beneath the brute.

III.

BLESSINGS FOR MALEDICTIONS.

WHEN the king had been apprised of the approach of the prophet, he went forth to meet him at the frontiers of his dominions. He reproved him somewhat for his dilatoriness. "I sent for you," said he, "why did you not come? Did you suppose that I was unable to pay the services you may render me?" "Prince," answered Balaam, "I am now here; but do you in your turn suppose that it would be possible for me to say other words than those inspired by God?" Three times did the false prophet endeavor to satisfy the king by cursing Israel, and three times God directed his tongue,

and made him utter, in spite of himself, the greatest of blessings in their favor. The next morning, at break of day, the king conducted his prophet upon a high mountain which was consecrated to Baal, the false god of the kingdom. Thence he showed him the camp of the Israelites, and he begged of the prophet to curse it. Balaam retired a few paces to communicate with the Lord, then he sought the presence of the king who was surrounded by the great of his kingdom, and to him he spoke those prophetic words: "Balac has brought me from Amram; 'come,' said he, 'and curse Jacob, hasten and load Israel with maledictions.' Ah! how could I curse a people whom God has not cursed? From the summit of this mountain I behold them, I contemplate them. This people shall not be confounded with other nations. He who can count the grains of the dust of the earth, shall count also the multitudes of the children of Jacob. O, that I may die as those just men! That my end may be like theirs!" Angered at these words, Balac interrupted him, and he said: "Wherefore do you thus speak? I have brought you thither to curse my enemies, and you presage prosperity for them; you bless them! - Come upon that mountain yonder, and

from there you shall curse Israel." As before, Balaam consulted the Lord, and with a prophetic tone he said: "Up, O Balac! and lend an ear to the voice of God! God is unchangeable. He has spoken, and His words shall come to pass. He has sent me hither to bless and not to curse. There is no idol in Jacob, neither is there an imaged god to be seen in Israel; the Lord is in the midst of her soldiers; her army is formidable, and the victories of her king are trumpeted by fame. Behold the Israelites seizing their prey and devouring it as a famished lion." "Enough, Balaam," exclaimed the king, "if you cannot curse this nation, cease at least to bless it." "Have I not already told you," said the prophet, "that I should utter whatsoever the Lord commanded me?" "Nevertheless," cried Balac, "you cannot depart thus; perhaps you might curse these tribes from the mountain of Phogor." Then Balaam, without consulting the Lord as before, cast his eyes towards Israel, and discovered the different tribes assembled around the tabernacle; immediately he was filled with the Spirit of God, and he cried exultingly: "How magnificent are your temples, O Jacob! How beautiful your pavilions, O Israel! They extend afar, like a valley decked with superb forests; like a deli-

cious garden watered by a clear stream ; like tents erected by the hand of Jehovah ; like cedars on the fertile borders of a river ; the purest waters shall ever flow wheresoever Jacob may dwell ; Israel shall draw abundance from the source of rivers. This people shall annihilate their enemies, they shall destroy them, and they shall pierce them with arrows. Blessed be this nation, and cursed be those who curse her children."

At these words, Balac became furious ; and he commanded Balaam to suspend his discourse. "What!" said he, "I have called you to my court to curse my enemies, and three times over you bless them ! Hence from my presence ! let me no more behold you. I was fully disposed to load you with riches and honors, but the God whom you serve deprives you thereof." "Prince," replied the prophet, "have I not said to your ambassadors that were Balac to offer me his palace full of gold and silver, I could not utter but the words of the Lord?"

Withal, this unhappy man meditated a scheme to enrich himself. But even then, the Spirit of the Lord seized him outright, and he resumed his prophecy. "I shall behold it," exclaimed he, "but not now ; I shall contem-

plate it, but at a distance ; a Star shall arise out of Jacob, a sceptre shall spring up from Israel." The prophet continued to announce the ruin of several neighboring cities, then he added : " Alas ! who amongst us shall witness the fulfilment of these wonders ? I see warriors coming from Italy upon their war ships ; they shall overcome the Assyrians, they shall pillage the fertile lands of the Hebrews, and these same warriors shall witness the destruction of their own kingdom." (Numb. xxiii. ; xxiv.)

Such were the prophecies of Balaam. Alas ! he was not a just man, though he uttered those beautiful and prophetic words, and the tongue that had been the organ of God soon became that of hell ! How good and merciful is the Lord ! He hoped by these predictions to convert a false prophet, and to enlighten an idolatrous prince. Meantime, He manifested to His people His greatness and His power, in order to confirm their confidence in Him. But all these warnings were despised by criminal and unjust men.

IV.

PERFIDIOUS ADVICE.

NOT being able to injure the children of Jacob by maledictions, Balaam attempted to do

so in another way. He succeeded in accomplishing his designs, and never could the most dreadful imprecations have caused them more harm than his diabolical counsels. He made promise to the king of Moab, to find expedient measures to rid him of his enemies; and in an audience which he granted him, he gave the king to understand that it were useless to attempt to destroy a people protected by God Himself; that the only means of triumphing over them, was to induce them to become idolaters, and to have them take part in other crimes capable of exciting the anger of God. Balac profited by his odious counsel, and he ordered that a splendid festival should be celebrated in honor of his idols; then the Moabite women and their daughters were sent among these wandering tribes to invite them to come and participate therein. This perfidious manœuvre had its effects; the Israelites accepted, and they went forth to the temple of idolatry where many of them were initiated into the worship of Beelphegor, and they committed dreadful crimes: they offered incense to the idols, and they ate the meat that had been destined for them; in a word, they were guilty of all sorts of abominations and infamy. God was angered with His people, and He smote them with a

contagious plague which menaced to destroy the whole nation. Moses implored God for the pardon of those at least who were innocent; but, the guilty ones should reap the fruits of their sins. The holy legislator therefore assembled the judges and the princes, and he communicated to them the orders of the Lord, telling them meantime that the transgressors should die, for having given themselves up to fornication and idolatry. It is on this occasion that the zeal of Phinees, son of Eleazar, manifested itself in a high degree.

Whilst the Israelites were lamenting at the entrances of the tabernacle over the crimes of their brothers, a man named Zambri, of the tribe of Simeon, had the audacity to commit, under the eyes of Moses and of his people a most grievous sin. At its sight Phinees was seized with a holy indignation, and strengthened with the Spirit of the Lord, he rose in the midst of the multitude, and armed himself with his sword, wherewith he immolated the guilty Israelite and his idolatrous accomplice.

God's anger was somewhat appeased by this example, and the plague instantly ceased, but otherwise the order of God was executed, and 24,000 of the prevaricators perished, including those who had died of the plague. How just

was the anger of God! "It is Phinees, son of Eleazar," said the Lord, "who has stayed my arm, I would have destroyed this nation, but his zeal has appeased my wrath. To him then do the Israelites owe their lives. Tell him that I make an alliance of peace with him, and that he and his descendants shall succeed in the ministry and in the popedom." (Numb. xxv.)

What evil! what harm do false prophets not cause! This is why the Lord tells us to avoid them. He forewarns us that there will be false prophets till the end of the world. Let us then be guarded against them; let us shun their company, for fear of being led away by their perfidious language, for the anger of the Lord would condemn us with them.

V.

TREACHERY PUNISHED.

God had punished His children, but not those who had perverted them. "My vengeance," said the Lord to Moses, "shall weigh upon the Midianites who have outraged my glory, who have seduced my people, and have caused them to fall into idolatry. Punish them, therefore, in order that your name may become terrible to them, for they shall no longer endeavor to

pervert my people. Then you shall be called from this world to dwell with your fathers." Moses obeyed the orders of the Lord, and he said to the Israelites assembled: "Fly to arms; our God will take vengeance of those Midianites who have caused crimes to be committed amongst us. Let each tribe make choice of one thousand men; twelve thousand brave soldiers will suffice for the accomplishment of His orders." Accordingly, each tribe furnished one thousand soldiers, well armed, and full of ardor for combat. Phinees, this zealous servant of God, placed himself at the head of the troops and faced the enemy of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant and the holy vases were placed in front of the army, as also the trumpets which were to give the signal of the combat. Balaam had gone towards Moab to reap the benefits of his hateful counsels, and at the same time to afford himself the pleasure of seeing the Israelites defeated. But his avariciousness was punished; the Midianites were completely routed; a large number remained on the field of battle; the five princes or petty kings who governed these people were slain, and Balaam was amongst the dead. Thus did he find the price of his wickedness, and the punishment of his treachery. After this great battle, the Israel-

ites pillaged Midian, burned the cities, the burghs, and the villages. The spoils were immense : six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, seventy-two thousand oxen, sixty-one thousand asses. A portion of this booty was left to the people, and the soldiers divided the rest between them. O wonder ! when the first officers presented themselves before Moses, in the transports of their joy, they exclaimed : “ Congratulate your servants, for we have counted our men, and not one is missing. When we departed, we were twelve thousand men ; we have fought, we have vanquished our enemies ; we have pillaged their lands, plundered and set fire to their cities ; we have taken possession of their herds and their slaves, and yet we are twelve thousand men. How ungrateful we would be to the Lord if we defer giving Him a mark of our gratitude. Allow us, then, to offer to the God of armies all the gold, rings, necklaces, brooches, bracelets, &c., which we have taken from the idolaters.” Moses accepted this offering, and he put all these rich jewels into the hands of the high-priest, and they found that the whole quantity weighed sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. Those jewels were deposited in the tabernacle, to serve as a memorial of the

mercy of the Lord towards His army. (Numb. xxxi.)

At all times there will be Balaams in the Church ; that is to say, false prophets, and of those persons who prefer their own interest to the glory of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, there will be Phinees, and ministers who are disinterested and devoted to the glory and to the salvation of man.

LAST WORDS OF THE LEGISLATOR OF ISRAEL.

I.

GRIEVOUS TIDINGS.

THE children of Israel were now stationed in the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho ; Moses, by the order of the Lord, and the high-priest, Eleazar, made the census of the people : they now reckoned six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty fighting men ; whilst thirty-eight years before, there was an army of six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men ; and in the former number there was not one of those who had departed out of

Egypt, aged twenty years and above, excepting Caleb and Josue. The children of Israel were now on the point of entering into the promised land, and the Lord said to Moses: "You shall ascend the high mountains of Abarim, and, from the peak of Phasga, on the summit of Mount Nabo, you shall contemplate at leisure all those beautiful regions which I am about giving to my people. I can only afford you this consolation, because you offended me in the desert of Sin, conjointly with your brother, at the Waters of Contradiction. You did not honor me in presence of the multitude, as I had a right to expect it from the chief and from the pontiff of Israel. Aaron has gone to meet his people; full soon you shall follow him." Moses implored the Lord to permit him to cross the Jordan to view the promised land, but his prayer was not granted. Then this man who was so powerful when he prayed for others, could not obtain for himself the favor of crossing the Jordan. The holy legislator humbly submitted to this decree; and full of tenderness and of solicitude for his people, he exclaimed: "I implore you, Lord God Almighty, you who know the depth of the hearts of men, and who dispose of them at your will, deign to make known the chief whom you have chosen to watch over the children of

Israel, to conduct them into the promised land, and to head them for battle, in order that they shall not be like a flock without a shepherd. "You shall take," said the Lord, "Josue, son of Nun, because I have spoken to him as to you, in the plenitude of my Spirit; you shall present him to the high-priest, Eleazar, and in presence of the people you shall give him the rules and the laws of the government. Tell him that the safety of the people depends upon the union of their chief with the sovereign pontiff, and you shall invest him with your power; command the children of Israel to obey him henceforth as they obey you." No man would have been more conformable to the wishes of Moses and of his people than the brave Josue. For forty years he had been the minister, the disciple, the confidant, the friend of the holy legislator; on all important occasions Josue was near him to receive his orders, and to share his labor. Being then at the age of ninety-three, he had had ample time to form himself upon the model of a great man, of a wise, firm, and religious legislator.

On the other hand, his own uprightness, his bravery, his experience, and his age, recommended him most highly to the people of Israel.

With sincere gladness did Moses hasten to

execute the orders of the Lord. He therefore assembled the people at the sound of the trumpet, and the high-priest, the princes of the tribes, and the elders, approached him, and, in the presence of the multitude, Moses pointed to Josue and commanded that henceforward they should obey and respect him ; then, by the imposition of his hands, he associated him in the government of his people. About this time, Moses regulated the manner in which should be made the distribution of the lands and the dotations of the Levites. The tribes of Reuben, of Gad, and part of the tribe of Manasses, were rich in numerous herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, and they begged of Moses the liberty to settle on the fertile plains which had been conquered. Moses consented, but on conditions that they would cross the Jordan with the Israelites, and that, with them, they would fight to conquer the promised land. They readily acceded to this, and Moses gave them the lands of Sehon, king of the Amorites, and those of Og, king of Bazan. (Numb. xxxii. ; xxxvi.)

Then the holy legislator, after generously making the sacrifice of the promised land and of his life to God, prepared for his voyage to eternity. What greatness of soul in this holy man ! He forgets himself in the interests of his people.

II.

SECOND CONFIRMATION OF THE
COVENANT.

MOSES assembled the Israelites several times before leaving them, so as to communicate to them his last wishes. First, he recalled to their memory the wonders operated in their favor whilst they sojourned in the wilderness, their murmurs, their revolts, their ingratitude, etc., then he bid them be faithful to God, if they did not wish to incur his anger: "Lend an ear, O Israel! to the laws and to the commandments of the Most High! By observing them you shall find life, and you shall possess the land which has been promised to you. Let all nations, beholding your piety and your virtue, say: 'This is a great, wise, and powerful people.' And what nations on the face of the earth have ceremonies, rules, laws, and precepts comparable to those given to you? And what nation again, how powerful soever she may be, has a God so intimate, so attentive to hear her prayers as ours? Study, therefore, His will, and instruct your children of the same. Above all, bear in mind the manner in which the law was published on Mount Horeb."

In another assemblage held by Moses, he exclaims: "Give ear, O Israel, to the Lord our God! the Lord is One. (Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom for ever and ever!) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

"And it shall come to pass, that if ye will hearken unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul; then will I send rain for your land in its due season, the first rain and the latter rain, and thou mayest gather in thy corn, thy wine, and thine oil. And I will give grass in thy field for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be satisfied. Take heed of yourselves, lest your heart be deceived and ye turn aside, and serve other Gods, and worship them. For then

the Lord's wrath will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens, that there be no rain, and the land will not yield her fruit, and ye shall perish quickly from off the goodly land which the Lord giveth you.

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates. That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.”

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them to make themselves fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringes of the borders a thread of blue. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after the in-

clinations of your heart, and the delight of your eyes, in pursuit of which ye have been led astray. That ye may remember, and do all my commandments and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God."

All that Moses recommended to his people was written down in a book which he placed in the hands of the priests, with his history, and they were kept in the Ark of the Covenant with the tables of the law. Every seven years this book was to be read to the people on the festival day of the Tabernacles, in order that they would learn to fear and to serve the Lord.

Once these instructions accomplished, the holy legislator disposed himself to appear before his God. (Deut. xxviii.)

Israel hearkened to Moses with a religious fear, yet Moses filled a ministry that should pass away; and when he had the misfortune to offend God, he became the object of His chastisement. What pains then must be reserved for those who trample under foot the Son of God and His eternal law!

III.

THE SUCCESSOR OF MOSES.

WHEN the holy legislator was on the point of death, the Lord spoke to him: "You are about leaving this world," said the Lord; "call Josue and go forth into the tabernacle with him." Moses obeyed, and he awaited in the sanctuary the commands of Heaven. Then the Lord descended in all His glory, and He manifested Himself to His servants under the form of a pillar of cloud that remained at the entrance of the tabernacle, to forbid the approach of the people. "Be armed with strength," said the Lord to Josue, "for it is you whom I have chosen to conduct my people into the promised land. Fear not, I shall be with you, and I shall combat my enemies at the head of my people. As for you, Moses, you shall soon rest amongst your fathers, and leave the children of Israel to the guidance of Josue. Alas! they will give themselves up to the worship of vain idols; they will abandon me, they will violate the alliance which I have contracted with them. And my fury will be kindled against this people and they shall no longer behold their God. I shall leave my sanctuary, I shall abandon it,

and they will say: 'It is because the Lord does not dwell amongst us that we have fallen into sin.' "

At length, abiding by the orders of the Lord, Moses and Josue composed a hymn in which the prevarications of Israel and her chastisements were announced. These holy men were directed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and when this beautiful hymn was completed it was sung in the presence of the Israelites, by whom, moreover, it was learned by heart, in order that they should each day be the prophets of their own ruin. Here is the beginning of this sublime canticle: "Heavens, lend ear to my voice, and you, earth, be attentive to the words of my lips," etc. * * * On the day on which this hymn was sung, Moses had order to ascend Mount Abarim, whereon he was to die, after having contemplated the promised land. (Deut. xxxii.; xxxiv.)

For forty years Moses had labored in the midst of contradictions and murmurs, revolts and fatigues, to lead forth his people into Canaan, wherein, however, he could not enter, in punishment of a doubt he showed in the desert; he bowed, nevertheless, in all humility to this just but sad decree, for he had the firm hope of being admitted into the promised land of Heaven!

On the great day of judgment, when the wicked shall see the just taking possession of their heavenly abode, when they will hear this terrible sentence: "You shall never enter here!" What despair! What wrath! to be forever banished from heaven!!!

IV.

DEATH OF THE LEGISLATOR OF ISRAEL.

MOSES hastened then to obey the orders of his Divine Master. He assembled the people to bid them a last farewell, and to give them his blessing, like a good father to his beloved children. Beside him were Eleazar, his nephew, and Josue, his successor. When about to speak, Moses was seized with a prophetic spirit, and his parting words were a prediction, as formerly were those of Jacob, dying in the midst of his family. After having passed his tribes in review, he terminated thus: "Blessed art thou, O Israel, happy are thy children. God is thy helper and thy protector; He will cover thee with His buckler, and His avenging sword will lead thee to glory; thy enemies will refuse to submit to thee, but they will be smit-

ten by His Divine power, and thou shalt trample them under foot."

Such was the last interview of Moses with the Israelites, who were stricken with consternation. He separated from the multitude, and accompanied by Eleazar and Josue, who were to be witnesses of his death, he ascended the mountain of Nebo, and from the highest peak, called Phasga, the Lord commanded him to cast his eyes upon the land of Canaan. Moses contemplated its beauty and its extent, whilst the Lord said to him: "This is the land which I have sworn to give to the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob. I have fulfilled my promise; you have beheld this land, but you shall not enter therein." When the Lord had spoken those words, Moses, who had now reached the age of six-score years, expired on this mountain, in the land of Moab; but so healthful was he, and so vigorous, that he felt not the slightest sign of old age—his sight was not weakened, nor his teeth impaired. Thus did Moses give up his spirit to God, leaving his body in the hands of his two faithful friends, Eleazar and Josue. Notwithstanding their exceeding sorrow, it was not to them that fell the care of burying this good master, but God, for reasons which He has not revealed to us, de-

prived them of this charge, which he confided to His angels. The archangel St. Michael placed the body of Moses in a valley of Moab. This operation was accomplished so secretly, that the precise spot of his grave was not discovered, lest, perhaps, the Hebrews, with their inclination to idolatry, might offer him Divine honors. But if the tomb of Moses remained unknown, it was not so with his memory, which was ever sacred to his people. This great man was beloved by God and cherished by his faithful subjects. God had manifested Himself to Moses, in all the greatness of His glory; He revealed unto him His precepts and His laws; nor was it in a hidden manner, nor by figures, but it was face to face that the Lord communicated His secrets to His servant whom He had likewise chosen to be His friend.

Chief, leader, historian, and legislator of the people of God, he was, moreover, God's pontiff and His prophet by excellence. Brought up at the court of kings, he did not forget that he was of Jewish blood, and when reduced to the labors of a country life, the Lord chose him to be the liberator of his people; He declared him to be the god of Pharaoh, and He made him the conqueror of this tyrant. He guided the Israelites to the promised land amidst a thousand

contradictions. True son of Abraham by his faith, resembling Isaac by the generosity of his sacrifices, equal to Jacob by the constancy of his labors, and greater than Joseph by the wisdom of his government, he merited to be placed amongst the heroes of the people of God.

Israel grieved the loss of this great man during thirty days, according to the custom of the nation for great personages. We do not notice that henceforth God communicated with any of His servants as with Moses, to whom He spoke face to face, for the accomplishment of His great and numerous miracles. (Deut. xxxiv.)

By the wonderful exclusion of the holy legislator from the promised land, God wished to make us comprehend that the gates of Heaven could not be opened either by Moses or by the law which he had given, but by Jesus Christ, Author and Perfector of the Law of Grace, which has alone the power of putting in possession of Heaven, the just of the old and of the new covenant.

THE
CHILDREN OF THE PATRIARCHS
TAKING POSSESSION OF THE
PROMISED LAND.

PREPARATIONS FOR A GREAT CONQUEST.

I.

GLORIOUS MISSION.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1605.

UNTIL then, it had been necessary for the Israelites to have a legislator and a father, but after the death of Moses, they had a general and a warrior, one who was full of tender love for his soldiers; a brave warrior, who was not, however, wanting in the skill of a legislator. Such was Josue, the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, who since the death of Moses, had inherited his power over the Hebrew nation. Being exactly ninety-four years of age, he had the experience of an old captain and the vigor of a young soldier, and to the

merits of military exploits, he united the purity of morals and the simplicity of religion which were so necessary to command the respect of the people of Israel.

A few days after the death of Moses, whilst the Israelites were still grieving over their loss in the plains of Moab, God made His voice heard to the new leader of His people. "My servant, Moses, is no more," said the Lord, "you, Josue, shall, henceforth, hold his place at the head of the children of Israel. Rise, therefore, and conduct them across the Jordan, to conquer the promised land, which I have destined for my people. All the lands wheresoever you shall set your foot, shall belong to you, for I have made this promise to my servant, Moses. Fear not the might of your enemies; whilst you command my armies, you shall be invincible. I have protected Moses all through his undertakings, and thus also shall I protect you. Arm yourself with force, be faithful, observe the laws which have been published by Moses. Do not stray from them ever, because you shall find therein the rules of conduct for all your undertakings. Let the study of this law be your constant occupation. Meditate on it day and night. Let it be the subject of your conversations. Practise it with exactitude, and it will enable you

to become the model or rather the living law of my people. Then all your actions, abiding by your precepts, shall be straightforward, your plans shall be wise, your triumphs just. Be full of courage, fear not, and be not dismayed, I who speak to you, shall be on your way, and I shall lead you wheresoever you go."

Faithful to the orders of the Almighty, Josue was filled with prudence, strength, and wisdom, and the children of Jacob were submissive to him. The first remarkable event was the passage of the Jordan, but before the Israelites commenced their march, Josue told the tribes of Reuben, of Gad, and of Manasses, which had already settled on the east side of the river, to be mindful of the conditions imposed upon them by Moses. "Remember," said he to them, "that all valiant men shall pass the Jordan, armed, and that they shall fight with their brothers, until like you they become the peaceful possessors of the lands which have fallen to their lot; thence you can return to your respective possessions." They all answered unanimously: "Command and we shall obey you; we have obeyed Moses and we shall obey you also; that the Lord may be with you as He has been with this great man. Whosoever shall dare to resist you or to contradict your laws, shall be

punished by death. You are the general of the armies of God; give us the example of intrepidity and courage and you may rely upon us. (Josue, i.)

There were over one hundred thousand combatants, but Josue was satisfied with forty thousand of the bravest men amongst them; the others remained to protect their families and their lands from the invasions of the neighboring enemies. The new general had to fight a warlike people, to force a multitude of fortified towns, and to keep in submission jealous and mutinous enemies. But when one acts under the order of God, difficulties become reasons of confidence, and they assure success.

II.

A RED STRING.

JOSUE departed therefore for the conquest of the promised land. On the first day of the first month of the new year, he chose two of the bravest of his men, and he gave them orders to cross the Jordan secretly, to take informations of Jericho and of its position, of the character and the disposition of the inhabitants, and he bade them to return immediately, in order that he might have full particulars of the country.

The messengers were dispatched forthwith, and the river being fordable, they reached the gates of the city towards evening, but they knew not where to pass the night, so as to be in readiness the next morning for their pursuits. They addressed themselves to a woman named Rahab. This person's position was somewhat suspicious, by reason of her keeping an inn, whence strangers were continually passing; but she was enlightened by faith and she adored the God of the Hebrews, whom she acknowledged as the only Sovereign Master of the Universe. Her house was situated at the gates of the city, and it stood near the ramparts of Jericho. The two spies were received by Rahab with cordiality; they saw that she was an honest woman, they judged her to be worthy of their confidence, and consequently they made her the depository of their secret. While they were thus conversing together, the gates of the city were closed, and they soon heard the noise of men approaching the inn; they were sent by the king to arrest the two Israelites who had not penetrated into the city without the knowledge of this prince. "Men or children of Israel," said they, "have last night entered the city—they are spies, and the king dispatches us to the house of Rahab to summon them to his presence."

These words were overheard, and Rahab instantly concealed the strangers. When the emissaries entered: "Produce the men," said they, "who are here concealed in your house, for they are spies who have come hither to take cognizance of these parts." "True," answered the woman, "strangers did enter here, but they have gone their way. Ere the gates of the city were closed, they escaped from hence in the dark; I scarcely know in which direction they have sped, but I fancy it must be in that of the river, they cannot be at a great distance; hasten thither, and you may likely overtake them."

They believed the report of this woman to be true, and accordingly, they followed her advice. The gates of the city were opened for them and they quickened their steps towards the fordable part of the Jordan. Meanwhile, Rahab concealed the spies of Josue upon the roof of her house, and she covered them with flaxen mattings which happened to be placed there. No sooner had the king's messengers departed than Rahab was seized with many fears, and finding no rest, she joined her guests and said to them: "I know that the Lord has delivered this country into your hands, the terror of your name is spread amongst us, and the inhabitants are stricken with fear and

dread. We have learned, how on your departure from Egypt, the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea, how you defeated the Amorite kings, Sehon and Og, who reigned in the countries beyond the Jordan; they have been cut to pieces and they are gone. The tidings of your exploits have reached us; a mortal fear has taken possession of our souls, and our hearts are palpitating with anxious expectation. Yea, the God whom you adore is the Lord, He is the God Almighty, He reigns above, and His power is great over all the people of the earth. Promise me now by the Lord, that you will be merciful towards my family, as I have been merciful towards you. Let us therefore agree upon a certain signal, whereby you will be mindful of the promise, which I exact from you for the safety of my father, my mother, my brothers, and of my sisters. Swear, then, to save us when the moment of the destruction of this city will have come!" "We promise it," responded the spies, "and our lives shall answer for yours and that of your family; but deliver us not this day into the hands of our enemies."

Matters being thus settled, Rahab fastened long cords to one of the windows of the house that commanded a view of the country, and the two Israelites descended safely therefrom

to the ground. On parting, Rahab recommended them to avoid the road leading to the Jordan, but to fly, rather towards the mountains, and to conceal themselves there during three days, because she foresaw that every possible search would be made for their discovery. The two Israelites acceded thankfully to her advice ; " We shall remember your charity," said they ; " and all Israel shall be grateful towards you. Do not forget to bind a scarlet string to the window by which we shall effect our escape, for this signal will be that of your safety when the city will be sacked ; assemble therefore in your house all your family and your kindred, and if one drop of their blood be spilled we shall answer for it." Having thus spoken, they followed the advice of their protectress, and they concealed themselves in the mountains.

Rahab had spoken by divine inspiration, for the king's spies had not ceased their searches for three days. No sooner, however, had they re-entered the city than the two Israelites passed the Jordan and hastened to relate to Josue all that had transpired concerning them, and as they terminated, they exclaimed : " Yes, the God of our fathers has delivered into our hands all the lands of Canaan ; the inhabitants

thereof are seized with so strange a fear, that at our approach they will flee in dismay and we will conquer them." (Josue ii.)

Faith is a virtue which pleases the Lord exceedingly; by it, Rahab was inspired to save the two Israelites, and behold Heaven rewards her by incorporating her with the people of God; moreover, she gives to Israel kings of her own blood, and ancestors to the Messiah. By faith we shall be saved, and like Rahab we shall redeem our family, and who knows how many souls may be indebted to us for their happiness and for their eternal glory!

III.

AN OBSTACLE OVERCOME.

It was with gladness that Josue greeted the two spies, who were more faithful than those who had formerly been sent by Moses. Josue immediately informed the princes of the people that in three days they would pass the Jordan. "Go," said he, "and publish throughout the camp, that the Lord is about putting us in possession of the rich lands which have been promised to our fathers. Therefore, let the people be in readiness to continue their march, on the tenth of the present month, for on that

day the Lord will be pleased to operate great wonders in our favor? On the eve of their departure, Josue assembled the people, and ordered all the children of Israel to purify themselves of their sins; "for," said he, with a holy zeal, "to-morrow you shall witness great things." On the day following, he sent heralds throughout the camp, to announce the order in which they should pass the Jordan.

At length, came the moment of departure. All the Israelites abandoned their tents, the priests bore the ark upon their shoulders, and headed the band, whilst the army followed in perfect order. It was harvest time, and the river was swollen to its utmost; nevertheless, the priests who were depositaries of the holy ark, advanced without fear and trod upon the waters. God had spoken, and by His Power He wrought a miracle which exalted the authority of the new leader. This miracle was the flowing back of the Jordan to its source, to open a free passage to the Israelites. The ark was stationed in the midst of the children of Israel; it was escorted by those of Levi, and the whole mass of people passed safely, with their wives, their children, and their baggage to the opposite banks of the Jordan.

But the ark having remained in the midst of

the river, the Lord said to Josue: "Choose twelve men of each tribe of Israel, and tell them to encircle the ark of the Lord; then they shall take in the channel of the river, and from beneath the feet of the priests, twelve large stones which they shall transport to the first encampment of the army, and there they shall form of them a pile, which shall serve as an eternal memorial of the miracles which the Lord has wrought in favor of the children of Jacob.

And when on some future day, your children shall ask the signification of this signal, you shall answer: "When we were passing the Jordan to take possession of the land which we now inhabit, the ark of the Lord, borne by priests, stopped in the midst of the river, whilst the waters thereof separated themselves in its presence, allowing a free and spacious passage to the Israelites." For this end also, Josue erected in the river, and on the spot whereon the ark rested, a monument of twelve stones of enormous size.

The ark meantime, remained in the Jordan, and the priests awaited order from Josue, their general, to continue their march therefrom. The latter commanded them to place themselves at the head of the army, and no sooner had they set foot on the opposite banks of the river,

than the waters resumed their ordinary current, and they filled with impetuosity the vast space which had been dried up under the feet of the multitude. When the ark had been borne ashore, Josue advanced the vanguard, which was composed of 40,000 men of the tribes of Reuben, of Gad, and of the half-tribe of Manasses. The other tribes followed in the direction of Jericho. (Josue iv.)

What could have been more properly adapted than those monuments, to remind the children of Jacob, that the hand of the Lord was Almighty, and that if it had stopped the current of the river, it could also combat and annihilate the enemies of the people of God?

THE RESULT OF A SACRILEGIOUS PREVARICATION.

I.

THE THIRD EASTER.

THUS they journeyed on in admirable order through the vast fields of the Canaanites, and with the same confidence as though they had been friends or allies. They encamped to the east of Jericho. Josue placed in the centre of

the camp the twelve large stones which had been embedded in the river. "Behold," said he to Israel, "the wonders of the Red Sea renewed. All nations shall have knowledge of these things, they shall adore the Power of the God of Israel, and you, children of God, you shall not forget them, nor shall you cease to respect and to fear the Lord God of your fathers."

In such like manner, did Josue become the fear of the wicked, and likewise was he honored by his people, as Moses, his holy predecessor. Hitherto, the kings of Canaan considered themselves secured by the rampart of a large river, which they regarded as an insuperable obstacle to the invasion of a wandering tribe; but, this barrier once forced, they were incapable of resolution and of counsel; and, confined as they were in their respective cities, daring not to show themselves, they appeared as mere slaves trembling in the presence of their masters.

However, the execution of the law relative to the circumcision, had been neglected during the forty years which had been passed in the desert. "Go, therefore," said the Lord to Josue, "and tell the people to prepare knives of sharp stone, wherewith they shall circumcise as formerly." This ceremony took place on the

eleventh day of the first month, at Galgal; three days hence, that is to say, on the fourteenth day, the Israelites celebrated the feast of Easter. It was the third since its institution: the first took place in Egypt on their departure from captivity; the second, after the erection of the tabernacle, and the third, when entering the promised land; this last celebration was rendered remarkable, for the next day, which was that of Easter, when they offered fresh crops that had been gathered in the country, and eaten new fruit, the manna, which had fallen regularly for the term of forty years to serve them as food in the vast wilderness of Arabia, ceased to be sent to them from above, and never more had they occasion to use it. (Josue v.)

The manna, which figures the holy Eucharist, disappeared when the Israelites set foot on the promised land, and thus will also disappear in Heaven the mystic bread, which is distributed to us at our holy altars, to fortify us in the desert of this miserable life! Then, God will no longer manifest Himself to us under the appearances of bread and wine. Ah! in Heaven, He will communicate Himself to the elect in all the splendor of His glory; He will fill our souls with infinite delight and felicity. What

a delicious bread is this God, whose possession is life eternal !

II.

A PRINCE OF THE CELESTIAL ARMIES.

A FEW days after the celebration of Easter, when the people had been circumcised, and when they were sufficiently able to continue their march, Josue thought of taking possession of Jericho. He went forth alone to the city, and was about reconnoitering, when suddenly, a stranger fully armed, and holding in hand a drawn sword, stood before him. The intrepid general advanced, and boldly demanded him : "Are you for the Israelites or for the enemy ?" "I am," responded the unknown man, "the prince of the armies of the Lord,* and by Him I am sent to you." On hearing these words, Josue knew the minister of the sovereign Master. "Lord," said he to him as he prostrated himself at his feet, "what orders do you bring to your servant ?" "First, take off your

* By some it is supposed to be St. Michael, the prince of the chosen people of God ; by others that it was an apparition of the Son of God, like the Lord to Moses in the burning bush.

shoes," said the messenger of God, "for the ground which you tread is consecrated by the presence of the Lord." Josue immediately obeyed, and the angel spoke to him thus: "I here deliver into your hands the city of Jericho, its king, and its inhabitants, but on conditions that you will observe and execute whatsoever I shall say. Marshal, therefore, your vast hosts and command them to move forward before the ark which shall be borne by four priests; seven other priests shall precede the ark, and they shall each of them sound a trumpet; the rest of the multitude shall follow. In this order, and for seven days, you shall make a march around the city; a profound silence being observed the while, and no sound other than that of trumpets shall be heard. On the seventh day the trumpets shall wax louder and sharper, for this shall be the supreme hour, and the people, amid loud acclamations, shall take possession of the city."

Josue was likewise informed of the destruction of Jericho, which, by reason of its exceeding wickedness, had become the object of God's curse; the inhabitants were to be destroyed by the edge of the sword, as likewise the flocks and herds, and the beasts of burden; fire should consume the houses and all rich apparel therein, whilst the gold, silver, copper, and brass should

be consecrated to the Lord, and placed in the treasury. Forty years previous, Moses had received the same order at the foot of Mount Horeb, with the difference, however, that the messenger of the Lord spoke to him in the midst of a thorny and burning bush, symbol of the persecutions of the children of Jacob, whereas here the angel appears to Josue with naked sword to show that it was no longer to deliver slaves, but to rally free men and to lead valiant soldiers on to victory. (Josue v.; vi.)

The Israelites are on the point of becoming masters of the land of Canaan. This was the inheritance which had been promised to their fathers for over 400 years. Twenty times God had renewed this promise, and they now claim their rights, which the Almighty shall confirm by the new miracles which shall mark their conquests at every step.

III.

A MILITARY MARCH.

JOSUE communicated the orders of the Lord to the priests and to the princes of the tribes. On the following day, which was that of the first month, he prepared the execution thereof. The people marched forward at break of day,

the soldiers being formed into companies and columns, with banners; they were headed by their officers, and commanded by Josue, the whole forming, as it were, a vanguard. Seven priests of the tribe of Levi, were in front of the ark, which was supported by four other priests. Then followed a large number of persons, the greatest silence reigning throughout; naught was heard save the sound of the trumpets re-echoing at intervals afar through the country. When they had accomplished, in religious display, the circuitous march around the walls of the city, they re-entered their camps, and the ark was placed in the tabernacle. The same ceremony and the same silence was observed for six days.

On witnessing the procession of the Israelites, the inhabitants of Jericho considered it at first as a significant show of their military force, but on further observation, they became reassured, and moreover, they ridiculed their solemn march around the ramparts of the city. Such is the spirit of the impious and of the incredulous; they see not the views of Providence, nor their own ruin which is near at hand.

At length came the seventh day, and Josue assembled the priests and the princes of the people; he told them that Jericho was to fall

into their hands, that it was anathematized, and that no Hebrew should reserve for himself any thing belonging thereto, or should spare any one of its inhabitants save Rahab and her family, inasmuch as she had given shelter and hospitality to the messengers of Josue.

Meanwhile, the multitude moved forward, and on the seventh day amid the loud shouts of the people, and the shrill voice of the trumpets, the walls of Jericho fell before the Israelites; they entered the city without further obstacle, they destroyed by the edge of the sword, all living beings, from the king to the last of his subjects, to the very flocks and herds and beasts of burden; the city was reduced to ashes, with all the costly things enclosed therein, but according to order, they took the gold, the silver, the copper, and the iron, and they were preserved in the tabernacle and consecrated to God.

Then Josue, animated with the spirit of the Almighty, who wished to make a striking example of this impious race, pronounced a terrible imprecation against whosoever should dare rebuild the city: "Cursed be, in the presence of God," exclaimed he, "whosoever shall rebuild Jericho upon its ruins! the corpse of his eldest son shall be cast into its foundations, and his

youngest son shall be borne to the grave." However, a city bearing the name of Jericho was built at a short distance from the ancient city; and when a rash Israelite was about erecting a city on its ruins, he was subjected to the vengeance of the Lord, and the predictions of the man of God were realized word by word. From the chaos of bloodshed, of carnage, and of fire, Rahab escaped with her family,—her father, mother, sisters, and brothers, and all her possessions. She had disposed her family to become members of the chosen people of God. She had not forgotten to bind a scarlet string to the window, from whence her guests had effected their escape. "Enter the house of Rahab," said Josue to the two spies whom she had saved, "and bring her forth with all those belonging to her." It was indeed with earnest joy that they acquitted themselves of this duty, and they conducted their benefactress and all her family into the camp of Israel. They were aggregated to the people of God, and moreover, later she married one of the children of Israel, by whom she had a daughter, whose name was also Rahab, and from whom descended the kings of Judah. (Josue vi.)

Thus ended this miraculous siege, during which the Lord manifested to His people that

He alone is the God of armies, and that He crushes at will the mightiest people, the most formidable ramparts; that He is the mighty avenger of crime, and that He annihilates by His word, criminal cities; that He is the good, the merciful God, who allows the sinner time to repent, and gives true happiness to the righteous, and to those who co-operate in the fulfilment of His will.

IV.

RESULT OF SACRILEGE.

THE ruin of Jericho was followed by that of Hai, a town of much less importance than the former. It was situated at a short distance from the camp of Galgal. Josue sent out officers to survey the city. On their return, they informed their general that it was not necessary to put in motion a whole army for so petty an expedition, and that two or three thousand men would assuredly suffice to conquer a mere handful of Canaanites confined within the dismantled wall of a small town. Although this counsel appeared somewhat rash, it would nevertheless have proved successful, had the God of battles aided His soldiers, but the

anger of the Lord was aroused by the disobedience of His people.

Josue marshalled 3,000 men for the siege of Hai, an able captain being charged with their command. As they were gaining access to the city, the besieged made a prompt and vigorous attack, routing on their way the army of the Israelites who were swept into the depths of a valley named Sabarim, where they descended without possibility of rallying their soldiers to their standard. Their loss, however, in this humiliating defeat, was but thirty-six men. When those sad tidings had reached the ears of the people, they were filled with dismay and awe, and Josue was so bereaved that he rent his garments, and he prostrated himself with the elders before the ark of the Lord, imploring Him for mercy and forgiveness. "Alas! O Lord God of our fathers," cried he, "shall you deliver us into the hands of the Canaanites, to be exterminated by the sword of your enemies? Is it for this end we have crossed the Jordan? Had it pleased you, O Lord, to leave us beyond the river, we should not be now exposed to the insults of infidels? What words of earnest repentance shall I utter, O my Lord God? Behold! O, behold our sorrows! and when the enemy shall have learned our

misfortunes, what then indeed will be their triumph? Shall we perish from the face of the earth? Shall we be destroyed forever!" Thus Josue remained with the elders in prayer till night, and humbly prostrating himself before the ark, he awaited the orders of the Lord. At length his prayers were heard. "Rise!" said the Lord to him, "your prayers have found favor in my presence. The children of Israel have sinned, they have transgressed my laws, they have violated the conditions of my holy alliance. Jericho was doomed to anathema and ruin, and they have usurped a part of her spoils; I have witnessed their fraud and their plunder, I am aware of their full prevarication, they have concealed their sacrilegious theft amongst their spoils. No, I shall no longer be your protector and your guide, till the guilty one be punished. Go, therefore, Josue, purify the people and tell them to dispose themselves for the convocation which will be held to-morrow, for hear what the God of Israel has to say: 'Malediction and anathema are upon you, O children of Jacob; and you cannot resist your enemies whilst the prevaricator remains with impunity. He shall be known in your midst, and he shall be cast into fire, with all that belongs to him.'" Thus, we see that the good

works of the just draw forth the blessings of Heaven upon their brethren ; the crimes of the wicked provoke likewise His anger and His just chastisements.

On the following day the general assembled all Israel ; the people were divided by tribes : that of Judah was fated, then the family of Zare, and finally Achan was branded as the prevaricator of the commands of God. Then Josue said to him with compassion and woe : " My son, give glory and praise to the God of Israel, confess humbly your crime, conceal it not ; what have you done ? " " Alas ! " answered Achan, " I am a transgressor ; I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and hear me out : I saw amongst the spoils a rich and magnificent mantle of purple. I took two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold of the value of fifty shekels. I coveted those objects, and I sinned ; I carried them away secretly, and I dug a pit in the centre of my tent, wherein I hid them. " The generals sent officers to visit the tent of the sacrilegious Achan, and they discovered there the precious things he had robbed. They brought him, in presence of the elders and of the people, the gold, the silver, and the costly mantle, which they placed before the temple as goods that had been robbed from the Lord. Josue had

them then taken, besides all that belonged to Achan ; his flocks, his furniture, even to the wood of his pavilions and of his tents, with his family, who had undoubtedly participated in this theft, into the valley where the crime should be expiated. There Josue pronounced the doom of the guilty man. "Because you have been a source of trouble among us," said he, "you shall be punished accordingly, and you shall die in our midst, and under our eyes." Achan and his family were stoned, and cast into a fire, with all that belonged to him. They accumulated upon their corpses a heap of stones, which served for a long time as a monument of the severity of the vengeance of God. Thence, this spot took the name of Achor, which means Valley of Trouble. (Josue vii.)

Such was the punishment of this impious man. He had escaped human justice, but he could not escape God, who sees every thing, and punishes or rewards accordingly. It is to be hoped that the repentance of Achan was sincere, and that he was pardoned for his fault ! And ye who steal your brother's goods ; ye sacrilegious who escape the sword of human justice, you shall never escape that of Divine justice. Ye shall be buried in the enormity of your iniquities, and there ye shall burn eternally without ever being consumed !

V.

SUCCESSFUL STRATAGEM.

AFTER this striking example, the Lord did not defer giving His servants renewed marks of His mercy: "My justice is now satisfied," said the Lord to Josue. "Banish fear, and your hearts shall once more be filled with confidence in me. Place yourself at the head of the army, and attack Hai: 'I have delivered it up into your hands, with its king and its inhabitants, and it shall have the same fate as Jericho.'" Encouraged by those words, Josue chose thirty thousand of his bravest soldiers, placing five thousand of them in ambuscade near the town. "Be in readiness," said He to them, "to fall upon the enemy, I shall be with you and the rest of the army when attacked; we shall pretend to flee; they will pursue us, but we shall fall back upon them; then marching forth from your ambuscade, you shall enter the town and pillage it."

Josue was obeyed, and every thing took place as predicted. At the head of his troops, Josue presented himself before the town; immediately the king of Hai issued forth with his people, and Israel, giving ground, was pursued by the

whole army, whilst they shouted loud cries of victory. The town was thus abandoned; for, in the midst of their enthusiasm, they little heeded its security. Then Josue, upholding his buckler, gave signal to enter Hai. The five thousand soldiers took full possession of the place, which they destroyed by fire. And when the soldiers and the inhabitants, who had been in hot pursuit of the children of God, looked behind them and saw the smoke of the conflagration towering high above in lugubrious clouds, they endeavored to retrace their steps, but it was too late. They were surrounded and taken prisoners by the pretended fugitives who massacred them all. So that the enemy, to the number of twelve thousand souls, lay scattered on the field of battle. The Israelites took possession of all the flocks, the herds, and the valuable stores of the town, and according to the order of the Lord, the sharing of the spoils took place at Galgal. The king of Hai was the last victim of this great slaughter; his dead body was thrown, without burial, far from the town, and it was crushed beneath a mass of stones. (Josue viii.)

God manifested great severity towards this people, because they were sinners, and hardened idolaters, who, in spite of the miracles

performed under their eyes, and within their hearing, refused nevertheless to acknowledge the superiority of the God of Israel over the divinities of other nations; otherwise, God, who is infinitely just, would have wrought in their behalf the same protection of which Rahab had been the object.

VI.

THIRD CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT.

JOSUE had in view a particular object at the taking of the town of Hai after that of Jericho; he had at heart the execution of the command of his predecessor for the renewal of the covenant of God with His people, which was to take place on the mountains of Hebal and of Garizim, after the entry of Israel in Canaan. And this new victory made easy for him the execution thereof, by opening a passage to the two mountains, whereon all the children of Jacob, men, women, strangers, and proselytes should meet to hear the reading of the fundamental articles of the treaty, and the confirmation of the blessings promised to the observers of this law, as well as the maledictions and the anathemas reserved to the prevaricators.

First the general, in gratitude for the brilliant victory he had won, erected an altar of rough stone, and offered holocausts and victims; he had the summary of the law engraved upon stones, and he made other preparations for the accomplishment of this solemn act. This renewal was accompanied with ceremonies which were of a nature fully capable of arousing the people, and of rendering them forever faithful to their engagements. He separated the multitude into two parts: six tribes were placed on Mount Garizim, and six on Mount Hebal, and in the centre of the valley between them were stationed the priests with the Ark of the Covenant. The tribes of one of the two mountains pronounced in a loud voice twelve forms of blessings in behalf of the faithful observers of the law; and the tribes of the opposite mountain responded *Amen*; that is to say, so shall be rewarded the observers of the law. Then, the former tribes, raising their voice, called forth this malediction: "Cursed be the man who shall make idols to adore them in his tent;" and the other tribes, raising their voice, answered, *Amen*; in such like manner shall be treated the enemies of God. And thus they continued, from one tribe to the other, until the twelve forms of blessings had been concluded. (Josue viii.)

The Lord, represented by the ark placed in the midst of the two camps, heard and confirmed those solemn vows. And indeed, we shall see, that so long as the Israelites remained faithful, they were loaded with blessings, and that no sooner had they strayed therefrom, than they drew down upon themselves the most terrible chastisements.

DESTRUCTION OF THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE.

I.

STRANGE IMPOSTURE.

HOWEVER, the kings and the people of the lands of Canaan, on realizing the losses they had sustained by the destruction of Jericho and of Hai, combined their forces to fight the Israelites. But whilst those blind and impious men rushed towards their own ruin, a small number of souls sought the means to escape the forthcoming danger, and the goodness of God did not oppose their design. Those wise and happy Canaanites were the inhabitants of Gabaon, a royal, great, and more populous city than Hai, from which it was situated but a short distance. On beholding the marvellous

success of Josue, and being fully persuaded that the Almighty God had delivered this land into the hands of the Israelites, they acknowledged the impiety and the folly of resisting a nation so visibly protected by Heaven. Here is the plan which they devised to elude the storm menacing them in the distance : they chose a certain number of envoys, who, according to orders given, laid in provisions to carry with them ; old sacks were placed upon their mules, with broken pouches, patched old shoes, tattered clothes, and stale loaves of bread. With this singular equipage, the Gabaonites hastened to present themselves before the Hebrew general. In a few hours they reached the camp of Galgal, where they were admitted to an interview with Josue, in the presence of all the Israelites assembled. "We come," said they, "from a distant country, for our desire is to be allied with you." "But, who are you?" answered Josue, "are you not the inhabitants of the land we have conquered? We cannot treat with you." "Lord," replied the envoys, "we are your servants, and we ask to be regarded as your friends." "I say," replied Josue, "that I command you to tell me who you are, and from whence you come." "Lord, your servants come from a far off land; God has directed us

hither. The fame of His might, and the marvels He has wrought for you in Egypt, the battles you have won, have reached our ears, and, despite the distance, we have likewise learned the fate of the Amorites, of Sehon, king of Hesebon, and of Og, king of Basan. Hereupon, our elders who govern us have sent us to you. 'Take provisions and food with you,' said they, 'for the journey is long; go seek the presence of a people protected by God, and say to them: We are your servants and we desire alliance with you.' Judge of the distance we have travelled by the condition of our equipage; the fresh loaves we had at our departure have become as hard as stone; those leather bottles which contained our wine were new, and you now see them broken and unfit for use; our clothes and our shoes are so worn out, that we blush to appear before you." The appeal of the Gabaonites appeared so full of ingenuousness and candor, that Josue, not having the slightest idea of fraud, granted them a treaty of peace which should expressly safeguard their people from all harm or death. This promise was confirmed by an oath. The Gabaonites were fully satisfied, and they returned towards their compatriots to apprise them of the happy result of their negotiation. (Josue ix.)

Josue should have consulted the Lord here-upon ; but God permitted things to take their course, inasmuch as He had at heart the salvation of a people, who had evinced more faith and less corruption than their neighbors.

II.

WATER-CARRIERS.

SCARCELY had three days elapsed since the treaty of peace with the inhabitants of Gabaon, when the mystery was cleared, and the people discovered that the pretended inhabitants of a distant country were no other than children of Canaan, upon whose lands the Israelites were about to enter. The surprise of the latter was very great, and Josue, somewhat alarmed, made speedy preparations for an expedition to the land of Gabaon. He therefore moved forward his troops. The gates of the city were thrown open at his arrival, and no opposition was shown either in Caphira, Beroth, or Caria-thiarim. In consideration of the submission of the Gabaonites, and of the promises made to them, no violence was used towards them. However, the people murmured against the indulgence of their chief, for they were resolved

to exterminate a nation by which they had been deceived. Josue and the elders opposed them. "We have sworn in the name of the Lord God of Israel, to use no violence towards them; they must not then be exterminated; let them live, for fear that by perjury we incur the anger of the Almighty; but they shall serve the children of Israel. Meantime, Josue summoned the Gabaonites to his presence, and he said to them with severity: "How have you dared to impose upon us? Why have you told us that you came from a distant country, whilst you are in our midst? Know, then, that in punishment of your imposture, you shall be cursed. You shall not be put to death; we have sworn it, and we shall act accordingly; but you are condemned, you and your descendants, from generation to generation, to serve the officers of the house of my God: the Gabaonites shall carry the water and the wood which shall be used in the tabernacle." "Lord," answered the elders of Gabaon, "what could we have done in the extremity to which we were reduced? We learned that the Lord your God was to deliver into your hands this land, and that all its inhabitants should perish. We believed His word, we feared His threat, and we had recourse to dissimulation for the security of our lives.

We hoped that being resolved to become members of the religion of your God we should also share its mercies. We are now in your hands; dispose of your servants as best you please." Josue spared the lives of the Gabaonites, but they were employed, as he said, in furnishing wood and water for the tabernacle. Happy indeed were they to escape the sword of the Israelites, and happier still were they to have become members of the religion of the true God. (Josue ix.)

Whilst a multitude of impious men swore their own ruin by fighting against Josue, the messenger of God, a small number eluded this danger by associating themselves with the children of Israel, and God aided them in their undertaking, He even took up their defence against their enemies. Although God had menaced this people, He did not wish to exterminate them, but He had at heart their conversion and the destruction of idolatry.

III.

THE LONGEST DAY.

ON beholding so many nations yielding to the victorious army of the Israelites, and moreover learning with displeasure the alliance of

the Gabaonites with them, the king of Jerusalem was seized with fear, and he gave himself up as lost if speedy measures were not taken to oppose their success.

Gabaon was a large, fine, and an important city, and its inhabitants were a warlike and courageous people. The prince, Adonisedec, and the Amorite kings united in a league to fight against the Gabaonites, and they endeavored to get possession of the city in order to destroy its inhabitants. Reduced to this extremity, the latter had no other means of safety than in the courage of their new allies and in the goodness of their general. They sent, therefore, messengers to Josue, who was in his camp at Galgal, and they said to him: "Lord, do not abandon your new subjects. Gabaon is besieged by the Amorite kings, and they are armed against us in the southern mountains; alone we cannot resist them; come, then, to our aid, and deliver us from our enemies." Josue lost no time; he consulted the Lord, who said to him: "Go, fear not your enemies; they shall fall into your hands, and not one of them shall escape. Josue went immediately to their assistance; and after a long march, he arrived, before sunrise, in full sight of the enemy. Urged on by the counsel of the

Lord, he rushed upon the assailants, who, not expecting so sudden an attack, were smitten with awe, and they fled without showing the slightest resistance. A great number of them perished before Gabaon, and the rest endeavored to find safety in a prompt retreat; but whilst escaping through the valley of Bethoron, they were enveloped by a hail of stones, and a greater number perished than by the sword of the Israelites. However, the day was waning, and a multitude of Canaanites were on the point of fleeing, when the holy warrior, seized with divine inspiration, addressed fervent prayers to the Lord, in the presence of the whole army; then, raising his eyes to heaven, he exclaimed: "Move not, O sun, toward Gabaon, nor thou, O moon, toward the valley of Ajalon." And the sun and the moon obeyed his voice, and stood still in the midst of the heavens until the enemy's army was cut to pieces.*

God, who had placed the planets in the firmament, and had marked out their course, could, at will, render them motionless, when He chose to favor His people.

A holy father says that the sun, in standing

* The sun and the moon had suspended their course for the space of twenty-four hours, and for this reason this day was the longest ever known. (Josue x.)

still,* acknowledged in Josue the power of Jesus Christ; that is to say, the light of truth which was declining, and which was to leave the world in utter darkness.

IV.

FIVE KINGS IN A CAVERN.

THE combat, or rather the flight, continued from early morning; doubtless, exhaustion existed on both sides; on the one hand, terror increased that of the fugitives, whilst the protection of God animated the Israelites to victory. A large number of the infidels were exterminated. The five kings, who, until then, had found safety in retreat, were now without resource, and they concealed themselves in a neighboring cavern, to await a favorable moment for their escape. The general was apprised of this secret, and he ordered the entrance of the cave to be closed with large stones, and to be also well guarded till the army of the enemy was totally defeated. "Now is the moment," said he, "to pursue them, to attack them, and to exterminate them;

* Though astronomy does not admit of the sun moving around the earth, it is evident that Josue thus expresses himself to make himself understood.

for you must bear in mind that they are idolaters, the enemies of God, and that we are charged with His vengeance." They therefore cut to pieces the remainder of the army, leaving but few of the fugitives to escape to the neighboring fortified cities. Thus did the Israelites complete the conquest of the enemies of God. At the close of this miraculous day, the troops assembled around Josue, in his camp at Maceda, and, by another miracle of divine protection, not one soldier was missing, nor was there a single one wounded or killed during so long a combat. God, who, by miracles which had never before been heard of, gave victory to His people, although not one drop of blood was shed amongst them. On the following day, Josue said to his people: "Bring forth the five kings who have remained in captivity in the cavern." When they were led forward, trembling, and half dead with fear, into the presence of their conqueror, Josue then called the generals of his staff, and bade them set their feet on the throats of these idolaters. Josue was instantly obeyed; and whilst the five impious kings groaned under the feet of their vanquishers: "Such shall be," said the general to his army, "the fate of every king, and of all nations which shall dare to resist

you. They shall be delivered into your hands ; you shall crush them, you shall exterminate them. As for yourselves, be not wanting in courage and confidence, and remember, that such of the Canaanites as you shall spare, shall soon become your seducers and your tyrants." The most important point of this instruction was the excessive fear of pernicious commerce with the idolaters. And this is the reason why Josue dealt so harshly with the five kings prisoners. They were then put to death, and their bodies were hung upon gibbets.

The Israelites were encamped at the gates of Maceda. Josue attacked this stronghold, and he took it by storm on the same day. The inhabitants were treated as those of Jericho and of Hai ; the king was taken and put to death ; they seized upon the spoils, and enriched themselves therewith ; and at nightfall they returned to the camp, where, by order of Josue, the dead bodies of the five kings were loosened from their gibbets, and they were cast into the cavern wherein they had fatally taken refuge, and the entrance was filled up by heavy stones as before. From this epoch, there was a long succession of victories and triumphs for the army of Israel. Josue took possession of all the countries lying south of Palestine ; he defeated

eleven kings with wonderful rapidity; the Lord God of Israel fought for him against his enemies. And he was mindful to attribute all the glory of those marvellous conquests to his Divine Master, who alone is the God of armies, and whom he recognized as such. After these glorious expeditions, he hastened with his soldiers to give homage to God, by humbly prostrating himself before the holy ark, which was then in the midst of the camp of Galgal. (Josue x.)

Those impious kings had heard of the numberless wonders and the miracles which God had performed; and, moreover, they were spectators of those wrought under their eyes in favor of His people, yet blindly did they persist in their incredulity; and instead of following the example of the Gabaonites, they armed themselves against them in order to exterminate these people, and by their criminal obstinacy, they accomplished their own ruin. Why did they not, at least, resign themselves for a happy end, when they witnessed the judgment of God so near at hand, and whilst they were abandoned to their own reflections in the cavern?

DEFEAT OF THE LEAGUE OF THE
NORTH.

I.

A WAR OF FIVE YEARS.

AND like the king of Jerusalem, Jabin, king of Asor, headed a league which he formed in the north of the land of Canaan. Under his command, therefore, the confederates rallied. The Amorites, the Hethites, the Jebusites, and other people of the mountains came at his call, to repulse the people of God. Never, perhaps, had there been seen a more formidable army, as much by the character of the generals as by their number. Vast hosts of soldiers, comparable in number to the grains of the sand of the sea-shore; legions of foot and horsemen, and a mighty display of war-horses and chariots of iron. The general rendezvous of this formidable army was in the environs of the waters of Merom, near Asor.

Josue being informed of the manœuvres of the enemy, resolved to march against them, and to surprise them without further delay; he

therefore moved his people onward, and with the greatest celerity, he safely reached the plains of Merom, without the enemy learning their approach. "Bear up against fear," said the Lord to Josue, "for to-morrow, at this hour, your enemies shall have fallen into your hands, and you shall then sacrifice them in the presence of all Israel; you shall hamstring their horses, and you shall burn their chariots, thus reducing them to ashes." The general obeyed the Lord, and made a speedy and vigorous attack upon the enemy; the confusion and the disorder amongst them was so great, that they found themselves utterly unable to rally their soldiers or recover order. Israel pursued the idolaters throughout all Palestine, and without respite did they press them on all sides, from the waters of Merom to the great city of Sidon, from Lake Maserephot to the plains of Masphe. No quarters were granted; and all those who fell into the hands of the Israelites, were put to the sword; the horses were hamstrung, and the chariots reduced to ashes.

But the general of the armies of the Most High was indefatigable, and he extended his conquests in all directions. After the battle of Merom, he retraced his steps, and besieged Asor, which was the capital of the country.

Jabin, its king, was taken prisoner ; he was then put to death, and all the inhabitants were butchered. The stores and spoils were carried away, and the houses were burned to the ground. Josue destroyed several other nations who opposed the progress of his arms. Nevertheless, his conquests were not as rapid as those of his previous campaigns, for this war lasted for five years, during which space of time, the people and their princes equally persisted in their impious attacks upon the people of God. Not a single town surrendered, nor did one of their kings throw down arms at the spectacle of an ever triumphant host. What blindness ! But their wickedness had reached its climax, and God deemed it unnecessary to tender His mercy in their behalf.

Towards the end of this expedition, Josue determined upon renewing his war in the south of Palestine. He had been informed that giants of the race of Enac, former inhabitants of Hebron, of Dabir, and of Anab, had again entered in full possession of the strongholds, and were about confining themselves therein. He therefore undertook to exterminate this body of formidable men. He marched boldly to their encounters, and defeated them upon the spot, destroying their towns, and butchering the

greater number of the Enaciens, allowing but very few to escape amongst the Philistines.

At length, after six years of continual war, after brilliant battles and great triumphs, God thought the moment propitious for the distribution of the lands of Canaan. Thirty-one kings taken and put to death, several millions of Canaanites exterminated, their kingdoms pillaged, their cities destroyed, and vast tracts of land laid waste, offered extensive fields for the prompt cultivation of the Hebrews. (Josue xi. ; xii.)

Once more, we must not consider with astonishment the destruction of the Canaanites. Israel was but the faithful executor of the will of God ;—a God whom the idolâtrous nation had angered, intrusted the Israelites with the infliction He had pronounced against them for their crimes, their idolatry, and their debauchery ; for the cruelties by which they sullied their worship ; in a word, for all the abominations whereby they infected the earth. “And this is why,” says the Lord, “they shall be exterminated.”

Let us return to ourselves, and consider that we are all, by sin, tributaries of the Canaanite and of the Amorite ; that is, of Satan ; moreover, we must annihilate all that is

contrary to virtue, and by this means become the kingdom and the inheritance of God.

II.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE INHERITANCE OF THE LORD.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1590.

JOSUE had now attained his hundredth year. He had fulfilled with fidelity and glory the mission with which he was charged against the Canaanites; but he had yet to place the children of Israel in possession of their conquests. Peace being established all over the country, the few enemies yet remaining had no desire whatsoever to be mutinous. Then the Lord spoke in these terms to His minister: "You are now at an age which few have the happiness to reach; you have conquered the portion of the earth I have destined to my people; do not, therefore, wait the extinction of the enemy to make the distribution of their lands amongst Israel. Award to each tribe the portion of land whereon the people may settle without fear of the idolaters, and thenceforth they shall multiply gradually under my protection, for I shall crush the nations that may rise up against them."

In order to abide by the orders of the Lord, Josue divided the country into twelve provinces, and gave one to each of the twelve tribes. As the tribe of Joseph was formed of the tribe of Ephraim, and of that of Manasses, the number of twelve remained complete, independently of the tribe of Levi, because those alone of this tribe, that is, the priests and Levites, had no share in the division, because God had set aside for their maintenance one-tenth of all, and the first-fruits of the earth. Forty-eight towns were allotted to the tribe of Levi, and they were situated in each province, so as to afford the priests and Levites facility to instruct the people, and to enforce the observance of the laws of God. The tribe of Judah, which was to give kings to the nation, and the Messiah to the world, had the first and the largest portion, and thus successively were the provinces given to all the other tribes. Josue then left the camp of Galgal, and the ark was taken to Silo, in the tribe of Ephraim.

This distribution was made with so much wisdom and impartiality, that no one had claims to make, and the neighboring nations remained in submission towards this people, so visibly favored by God. But the Lord would not permit them all to be exterminated; He wished to

make use of them to try the fidelity of His people, to remind them of His mercies ; and as instruments of His justice, should the Israelites forget His favors. Thus, also, in the way of our redemption, does the Lord leave us enemies, permitting combats against us to awaken our senses, and to furnish us causes of merit and eternal reward. (Josue xviii.; xxi.)

And after these struggles, all the descendants of Abraham, and all those who shall be endowed with the faith, the charity, and the virtues of this holy patriarch, shall inherit the promised land ; that is, Heaven : there, there will be no combats ; there, no labor ; there, no agonizing sorrow, no suffering, no pain ; but ineffable delight will satiate us forever ! Let us yearn for this celestial home ; let all our thoughts, our desires, and our affections, be centred in its possession.

III.

DISBANDED SOLDIERS.

AFTER the Israelites came in possession of the promised land, their general deemed it just to dismiss the forty thousand Israelites of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and of the half tribe of

Manasses, who had their lands beyond the Jordan. "Brethren," said he to them, "you have executed the orders of Moses; you have obeyed with deference, you have fulfilled the will of the Lord, and He is satisfied with your submission. Now that we enjoy the peace which the Lord has promised us, you can return to your tents in the lands assigned to you; but remember the words of Moses and the law of God; love the Lord your God, walk in His ways, worship Him with fidelity, serve Him with your whole soul, and consecrate to Him all the affections of your hearts. I wish you all abundant blessings. You are now enriched with gold, silver, brass, iron, superb garments, and costly jewels. Share your wealth with those who have tilled your grounds whilst you have been fighting our enemies." Those good Israelites followed the advice of their general, and they departed from Silo to regain their own habitations beyond the river. When they reached the borders of the Jordan, the disbanded soldiers erected an altar of excessive height, which they destined as a memorial of their great victories, and immediately after, they crossed the river, and each one repaired to his home. The tidings of this undertaking were soon spread amongst the different tribes, and they

were scandalized thereby. "The altar," said they, "has been erected in honor of the false gods, and it is a monstrous infidelity; and, moreover, it is destined to offer oblations to the God of Israel, and this is an infraction of the law." The crime appeared without example, and they believed themselves exposed to the wrath of Heaven, were it to remain unpunished, so that an army was to be soon in readiness for an attack on the prevaricators. However, they had no desire to condemn brothers who had given them so many striking marks of their fidelity, and they determined to send out a deputation of ten men, taken from amongst the ten tribes; Phinees, son of the high-priest, Eleazar, was to head them. When they arrived at Galaad: "What means," said they, "the enormous crime into which you have fallen? Who has prompted you to separate yourselves from God and your fathers, to erect a sacrilegious altar against His glory and His laws, and to stray from our holy worship? You abandon the alliance of Israel, and to-morrow Israel shall become the prey of the vengeance of God. If you deem as impure and profane the lands which have been allotted to you, come with us, and dwell in view of the holy tabernacle. You were amongst us when Achan transgressed the

law of the Lord, and you saw the manner in which He manifested His anger; one man had sinned, and how many were punished for his crime!" "God knows the sincerity of our hearts," answered the accused, "and full soon shall Israel be apprised thereof. If we have erected this monument in a spirit of disobedience and revolt, the Lord will punish us and abandon us. We built this altar upon the border of the river, not as one whereon we would sacrifice victims, but as an eternal memorial for our brethren and for ourselves, with equal right to offer to the God of Israel unbloody sacrifices. Heaven preserve us from the attempt of which you accuse us! We call God as a witness that we have not abandoned Him; neither have we strayed from His ways. We have not transgressed His law, because we have not erected this altar to prejudice that from whence He accepts the blood of victims. Phinees and his suite were delighted to find them so candid and so innocent. "No, you merit neither chastisement nor reproach," answered he, "you are exempt from sin; we believed ourselves exposed to the anger of God, but we now hope that He will shower down His abundant graces on all His children." They then hastened forth to inform Eleazar and their general of the

happy dispositions of their brethren. These tidings were received with great joy, and they offered loud thanksgivings to the Lord. This altar was called by those who erected it: *Authentic monument, whereby we acknowledge that the God of Israel is the Lord our God.* (Josue xxii.)

This courageous zeal to defend the laws of God, was a mark of the innocence and fidelity of the children of God, who did not fall into any act of idolatry during the government of Josue.

IV.

PATERAL SOLICITUDE.

THIS great man had now attained the age of one hundred and ten years ; he was more worn by arduous labor than by old age. Full of solicitude for his people, he feared that his death would occasion them to relapse into former errors ; and to prevent this, he called together a general assembly of the people at Silo, near the tabernacle, at which place the elders, the princes of the nation, the officers of the army, and the magistrates, gathered in multitudes ; “ My brethren,” said he to them, “ you have witnessed the wonders which the Lord has

operated to fulfil His promises ; He has fought for you, He has made you victorious over the surrounding countries ; you are in possession of the lands which were once occupied by the Canaanites. It is true they are not all exterminated, but they shall vanish from the face of the earth, and you shall possess the whole extent of the promised land. You must not, therefore, check the current of His blessings ; bear up courageously, and keep the commands of our holy leader, Moses ; different nations will attempt to pervert you by their bad example ; but swear not in the name of their gods, nor adore their idols, nor offer them incense. Be forever faithful to the Lord our God, and under His guidance you shall see the most warlike people and the most formidable armies tremble at your approach ; one of your soldiers shall attack and put to flight a thousand of the enemy ; the Lord fights for you against them, and what power has a multitude of warriors in the presence of the God of armies. Love the Lord with your whole heart, and I shall answer for His blessings. On the other hand, if you abandon Him to associate with idolatrous nations ; if you make illicit alliances with them, God will withdraw His protection, and your enemies will triumph over you, and they will

dwell in your very midst to chastise you. They will place precipices beneath your footsteps ; they will set snares before your eyes ; they will blind you and bewilder you, till at length they will expel you from those beautiful and fertile lands which the Lord has given to you. As for myself, my brethren, I feel that my end is near, and I await the moment when I shall be called to my fathers. So near death, could I deceive you ? and, besides, you know that my words speak truth. Yes, you shall cease to be happy when you shall cease to serve the Lord. His anger shall be great, and His indignation shall break forth against the ungrateful. You were the cherished portion of His inheritance, and He shall disown you ; He has put you in possession of the most fertile country in the world, and He will drive you forth, and you shall be bound in chains in the midst of your enemies." (Josue xxiii.)

What tender solicitude this holy general manifested towards his people ! And with reason did he fear that, at some future time, they would become forgetful of their duties towards God who had wrought so many wonders in their behalf.

V.

FOURTH CONFIRMATION OF THE
COVENANT.

BEFORE leaving forever his beloved Israelites, Josue wished to give them a last mark of his love; he convoked, with the high-priest Eleazar, a last general assembly of all the people, at Sichem, there, where Abraham had formerly offered a sacrifice, and where the alliance was, for the first time, confirmed by promise.

Those great gatherings of the nation were generally held at Silo, where the ark was placed; not so this time, however, because Josue had been charged by Moses to inter at Sichem the precious remains of Joseph, which had been taken from Egypt to Canaan, by the express order of the holy patriarch. He acquitted himself of this duty, and the ceremony was accompanied with all the pomp demanded by the dignity and the virtue of so great a personage. His body was inhumed near Sichem, in the field which Jacob had bought from the children of Hemor, for the value of one hundred sheep, and which was at the moment

of the distribution of the lands, situated in the portion of Ephraim, son of Joseph.

A large concourse of people having assembled, Josue addressed them thus: "My brethren, God now speaks to you through me. From the commencement, your fathers have dwelt upon the other side of the Jordan. Thare, the father of Abraham and of Nachor, did not pass the river, and your forefathers have served false gods in Mesopotamia. From thence I withdrew Abraham to place him in the land of Canaan; I promised him a numerous posterity; I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob, who went forth into Egypt with all his children. There they multiplied considerably, and I sent Moses and Aaron; I performed a great many miracles, and delivered you from captivity; you established yourselves on the borders of the sea. Hemmed in on one side by the deep, on the other, by the formidable army of the Egyptians, your loud cries reached my ear, and I listened to your voice. I screened you from the Egyptians, who were swallowed up by the waters of the sea, whilst you passed through its waters without danger; and when sojourning in the wilderness did I not fight for you against the Amorites, and have you not become possessors of their lands? Balac

raised up the prophet Balaam to curse you, but instead, he gave you blessings. You know in what manner you crossed the Jordan, how you entered Jericho, and how you exterminated the people of Canaan. You have drawn your sword, bent your bow, and shot forth your arrows, but neither sword nor arrows gained you your victories; it is your God who has put you in possession of the promised land, of cities you have not built, and of the olive-trees, and of the vines you have not planted: such in your behalf, are the works of my Almighty hand, the marvels of my mercy.

"Now my brethren," continued the holy patriarch, "fear the Lord as well as love Him with all the strength of your hearts. Obey Him with pure love, practise His laws, and shun the infamous gods which your fathers and their children have served in Mesopotamia and even in Egypt; or if you choose to abandon the service of God, you are free: take then and adore those divinities, whose worshippers you have vanquished. As for me and mine, we shall adore the Lord, and we shall die whilst adoring Him." "What is this?" expostulated the people. "Away with those abominations. We could never abandon the Lord after the great wonders He has wrought in our

favor! We shall never adore but Him, because He alone is the Sovereign, the Father, and the Protector of Israel." "No," responded Josue, "you cannot serve God and false gods. Your God is holy, He is powerful, He is a jealous God. Your first attempts towards false gods will provoke His just anger; He will abandon you, and after having loaded you with favors, He will crush you with calamities." "No, no," answered they, "the evils wherewith you threaten us shall not be; we shall remain faithful to the Lord, and we shall serve but Him forever." "Well," replied Josue, "I believe you upon your words; and you shall be some day your own accusers if you violate them; tell me if it be not by your own free will that you serve the Lord?" "Yes," replied the multitude, "and if we perjure ourselves, that our words condemn us." "Then strike down," said Josue, "the idols which still remain amongst you; exterminate the idolaters, and turn your affections, your thoughts, and your hopes towards the Lord God of Israel, whom you have chosen for your God." "We shall do so," they exclaimed anew, "we shall serve the Lord and obey His laws."

The holy general then reminded the people of their promises and their obligations, as

Moses had done before his death, and like him, he wished to renew their alliance with God, and to have this ceremony written down and added to the volume of the law which was placed in the ark. In order to impress the whole concourse of people, Josue commanded an enormous stone to be placed under an oak, then turning to the multitude he said: "Behold this stone shall be a testimony unto you, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord, which He hath spoken to you, lest perhaps hereafter ye deny it, and lie to the Lord." After these remarkable warnings, the multitude dispersed. (Josue xxiv.)

Nothing more could be expected from the zeal of this holy general, than this solemn renewal of the alliance of God with His people; and if during his life he was the bravest and the most skilful warrior of his nation, he was also the holiest of men.

VI.

DEATH OF AN ILLUSTRIOUS CONQUEROR.

BEFORE JESUS CHRIST, 1580.

Soon after this solemn ceremony, the princes and the elders of the people were convoked

anew, upon the death of Josue. He was one hundred and ten years of age, and worn out by pain and labor, his end did not surprise his children, though his loss was irretrievable to all. In him, they lost a great general, an angel of counsel and of strength, the friend of God, the confidant of His secrets, and the depository of His power. He was great even in his name: Josue or Jesus, figure of Him who should be in the ages to come, the true Josue—the Saviour of all the people of the world; prophet and successor of Moses, he taught the children of Israel with as much zeal as he fought for them; conqueror of the Amalekites, he had gained advantage and victory for Israel. Caleb and he, alone, took no part in the sedition of His people, and he merited on the whole the praises of the Lord. Leader of the children of Israel, and commander of the armies of God, he renewed the miracles of Moses, and even perhaps wrought greater ones. More fortunate than Moses, he seldom found mutiny amongst his people, and he was less severe.

Josue was born in Egypt, fifty-three years before the going out of the Hebrews from thence under Moses; he had spent forty years in the wilderness as the confidential minister of this great man, and he was ninety-four years of age

when he succeeded him. For six entire years, he was armed continually for the protection of the people, and for the conquest of the promised land. During the ten last years which were years of peace, he regulated, with the high-priest, the civil and political governments; he enforced the rules of Moses, and kept up the ceremonies of Religion.

This great man was buried in the town of Thamnathsare, which he had rebuilt, and which was given to him by his people. His funeral was accompanied with the same ceremonies as that of Moses, and the people mourned for him the same length of time.

The death of Josue was followed by that of the high-priest Eleazar, third son of Aaron, who had succeeded his father by the death of his brothers Nadab and Abiu. He was buried in the town of Gabaath, which was given to his son Phinees, likely on account of the zeal of this great man at the time of the prevarication, and the idolatry of Israel in the temple of Beelphegor, or of the victory gained over the kings of Midian; he succeeded his father in the ministry. (Josue xxiv.)

VII.

FIGURES.

THIS great man whom God had chosen to lead forth His people into the promised land, was, like Moses, one of the most beautiful figures of the Messiah; and indeed, Josue means Saviour; Jesus means Saviour. Moses could not lead forth His people into the promised land; this power was granted only to his successor, Josue. Our Lord also succeeds Moses. His law replaces old law, and He alone has the power to lead His people into the promised land—Heaven!

Josue triumphs by numerous and marvellous victories over the enemies of His people, who opposed his settling on their lands. Jesus Christ triumphs by His numerous victories, and by His miracles over the enemies of Christianity who opposed Him. Josue bade the sun to stand still. Our Saviour bids the light of truth to shine forth whilst that of the Gospel is spread throughout the world.

After having given wise advice to his people, Josue went to his fathers. The Saviour, after having given to His disciples, and to the world the wisest of precepts, and the most admirable

of lessons, ascends from this earth to dwell with His eternal Father.

The Hebrews remained happy as long as they practised the wise lessons of Josue; but were they to neglect them, they were immediately to fall into the hands of their enemies to be their slaves.

Christians are happy as long as they follow the lessons of the Divine Master; but if they become unfaithful, they will be the slaves of Satan, and their passions will tyrannize over them.

THE END.

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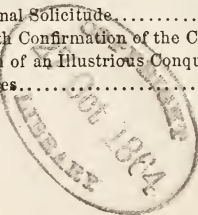
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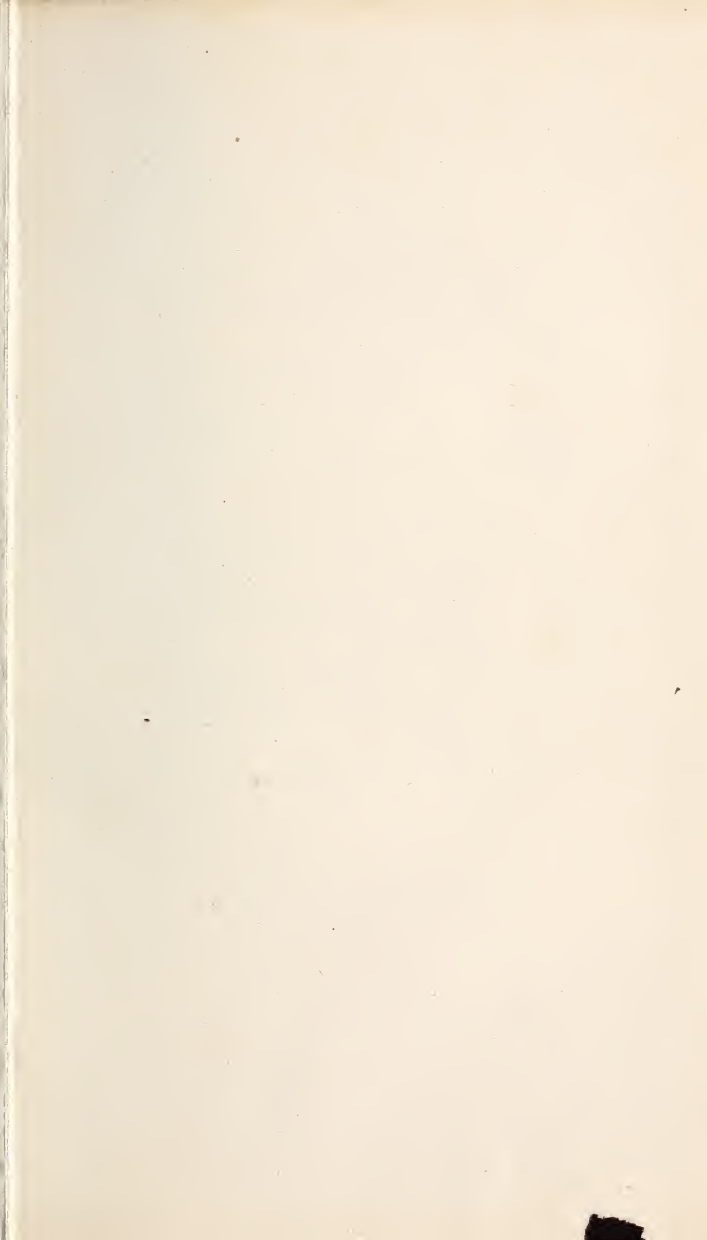
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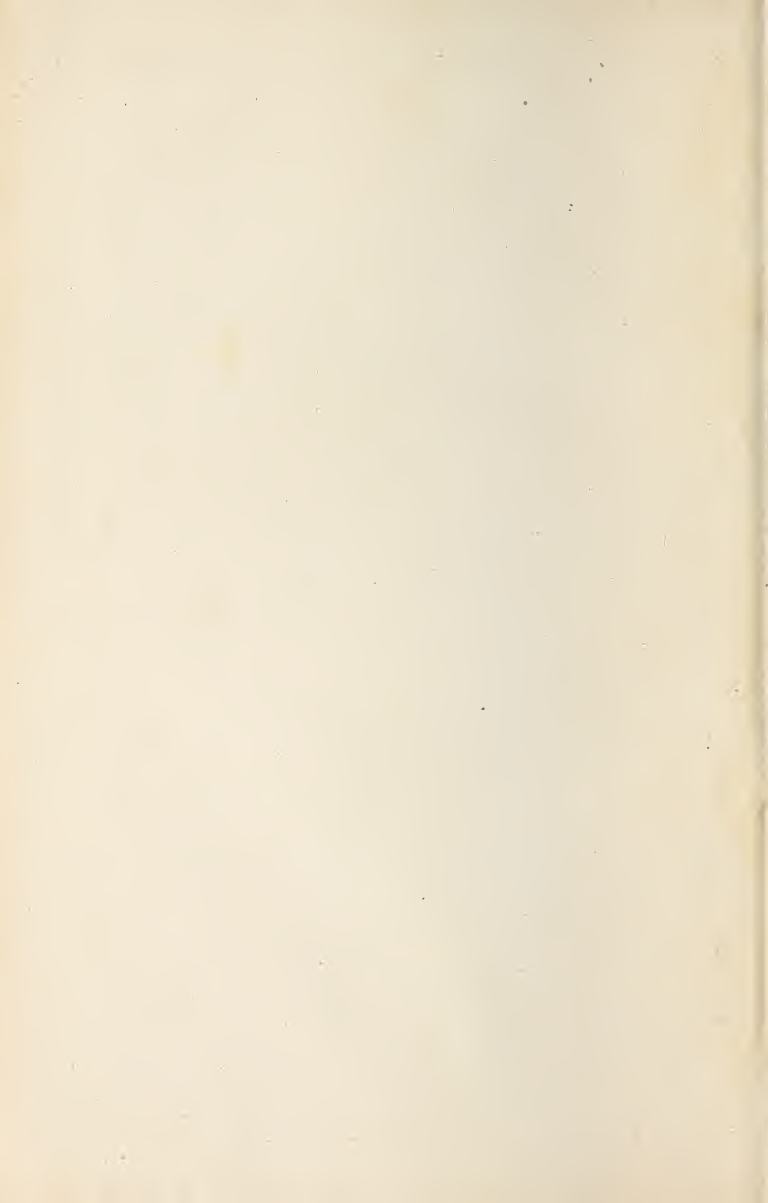
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